



Somerville Public Schools

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Dear Families and Staff:

It was incredibly heartwarming last week to see the excitement in our pre-K and Kindergarten kids' faces about finally getting to meet their "Zoom celebrity" teachers face-to-face, after having waited their whole lives to come to the 'big school'. We look forward to welcoming our largest group of students back to our classrooms next week as we continue to work toward a full return for our PK-8 students the week after April vacation. We were excited to welcome about 587 of our first and second grade students back to our classrooms this week! We now have close to 1,450 students who have transitioned to our in-person model, and we are continuing to make significant progress in phasing students back to school for in-person learning.

We will continue to phase students in over the next two weeks, with students in grades 3-6 transitioning to our hybrid in-person model next week, and students in grades 7 and 8 the week of April 12. As with previous phases, teachers will teach remotely from their classrooms on Monday and Tuesday of the week their students return, Wednesday is an all-remote day, and students are in-person Thursday and Friday based on their cohort assignment. Students in Cohort A are in-person on Mondays and Tuesdays and remote the rest of the week. Students in Cohort B are in-person Thursdays and Fridays and remote the rest of the week.

As noted in last week's update, the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) approved our request for a waiver that allows us to continue phasing groups of students into a hybrid model first before transitioning to full in-person five days a week. **We will be moving to full in-person five days a week for all PK-8 students the Monday after April vacation. Please note that this is a change from our original plan of having students and staff return in the hybrid model on Monday and Tuesday after the break before moving to full in-person on Wednesday, April 28th, as noted in last week's update. We believe moving to full in-person on Monday following the week-long break, and eliminating a mid-week transition, will facilitate the shift to full in-person for our PK-8 students, families, and staff. Our [Schedule of Phases](#) has been updated to reflect the 2-day earlier start of full in-person five days a week for PK-8. Monday, April 26th will be a 2-hour delayed start for all PK-8 students so that all staff can rapid test after the break before resuming classes. April 26 start times for students are 10:45 for PK and 10:15 for grades K-8. The 26th will be a regular 1:45pm dismissal for PK and 2:35pm dismissal for K-8 students. All PK to grade 8 students will resume their regular in-person start times on Tuesday, April 27th.** We are awaiting further guidance from DESE for high school grades and are continuing to look at ways to bring more Somerville High School students into the new SHS building.

We want to remind families that as part of our comprehensive set of [health and safety measures](#), students and staff are required to participate in baseline testing prior to returning to in-person instruction, and to subsequently participate in routine Covid-19 assurance testing. [Baseline testing](#) will be available at the Kennedy and the East Somerville each Wednesday during designated times. Families will be notified about baseline testing schedules as their scheduled return date approaches. We will be scheduling Covid testing times during the April break and ask that students try to test that week. Staff are also encouraged to do so in order to keep our community safe. More information will be provided in next week's update. We also want to reassure families that as part of our comprehensive set of health and safety measures, all cleaning and Personal Protection Equipment (PPE) items for staff are being supplied by the schools. Visit [Transition to In-Person Learning Website](#) for more information and updates about our reopening.

Finally, I'm excited to share with you that the Rennie Center for Education Research and Policy will be spotlighting the Somerville Public Schools as the subject of "[A Year in the Life](#)," a series of blog posts beginning this week about how our district has adapted to the pandemic over the past year. We hope this examination of the challenges we've faced and our strategies to overcome them will be a useful case study.

Respectfully,

Mary Skipper, Superintendent of Schools