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Dear SPS Parents and Guardians,

As we prepare for the Winter Break, we want to provide you with an update of the building ventilation work and school reopening plans as shared at Monday night's School Committee meeting ([slides available here](#)). We appreciate the work that Rich Raiche and his team at Somerville's Department of Infrastructure and Asset Management (IAM) have done over the last several months to ensure that our school buildings are ready for a safe reopening.

We received a new preliminary construction schedule that includes optimistic and pessimistic timelines for completing the ventilation work at each school building. As we mentioned last week, the city was able to reduce the lead time on securing filters needed to complete this work, reducing the building availability timeline by several weeks. While there is a possibility that we may have 2-6 buildings available for use sometime in February or March, with SHS slated to be available mid- to late January, our plan is to utilize school buildings as they are available to return students in the phases identified in our Reopening Plan. Our highest priority students will be PK-12 students with special needs and students who are English language learners at levels 1 and 2, followed by Pre-K and Kindergarten students. Once we know the exact date of when our schools will be ready for occupancy, we can finalize all of the necessary logistical pieces and start our transition to in-person instruction. Those logistics include:

- Survey parents/guardians to find out which students will be returning and which will be opting to stay remote; this information may vary based on whether students will be at their 'home' school or temporarily in a different school.
- Schedule transportation for students with special needs and level 1 and 2 English learners. It is important to note that transportation companies have limited capacity due to distancing requirements.
- Schedule and conduct baseline testing for all students and staff returning to in-person instruction at each particular building.
- If specific programs are being temporarily relocated to a different building, arrange for moving of furniture or other specialized equipment. This involves working with DPW and setting classrooms up for any programs that are being relocated.
- Continue to work with our unions on negotiating any change in working conditions and planning for a smooth transition back into our school buildings.

Building mitigation work has begun and we will continue to keep you informed on a weekly basis and as we get concrete building availability dates. In partnership with the City, we will be hosting our next Schools Town Hall meeting sometime in January and will pass along details once that date is finalized.

We will also continue our weekly COVID-19 testing for essential SPS and city staff who are currently working from school buildings and/or interacting face-to-face with students. More than 300 staff have been tested in the last 2 weeks through our partnership with the Broad Institute and Tufts University.

Finally, we would like to provide clarification on a number of vaccine-related questions and concerns that have come up.

- Yesterday we were notified that the Massachusetts Department of Public Health has extended the deadline for students to receive the flu vaccination until February 28, 2021.
- Students will NOT be unenrolled if they do not receive the flu vaccine, but must receive the flu vaccination before being able to return to in-person instruction. Students who do not receive the flu vaccination will remain in remote learning.
- The P-EBT program that provides food support to families is NOT connected to the flu vaccination requirement in any way. Families will NOT lose their P-EBT benefits if their student does not receive the flu vaccination. You can learn more about the P-EBT program at this link: <https://www.map-ebt.org/home/#ihdtab>.
- We recognize that scheduling appointments for students to obtain their physicals is challenging because of limited health center schedules due to COVID-19, and will continue to work with families as needed.

Once again, our sincere thanks for your commitment and partnership throughout this difficult year. We wish you a safe, restful and rejuvenating Winter Break, and look forward to a healthy and hopeful 2021.

Respectfully,

Mary Skipper, Superintendent