



MANCHESTER ESSEX REGIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICT
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PAMELA BEAUDOIN
SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLS

September 28, 2020

Commissioner Jeff Riley
Department of Elementary and Secondary Education
75 Pleasant Street
Malden, MA 02148

Dear Commissioner Riley,

In response to your request, the Manchester Essex School District respectfully submits the following update on our time line for implementing in-person instruction for the majority of our students. At its August 11, 2020 meeting, the MERSD School Committee voted unanimously to begin the 2020-2021 school year with a remote learning model that prioritized in-person learning for our high needs and special education students.

MERSD began the academic year by welcoming all our students back to campus for our in-person community building and orientation days on September 11th, 14th, and 15th. Additionally, we used those days to administer our kindergarten benchmark testing in-person. On Wednesday, September 16th, K-12 special education students in specialized programs returned to full in-person instruction (4 days per week) with the remainder of the student body beginning the remote learning portion of our [flex hybrid learning model](#).

Although the school year began remotely for the majority of our students, MERSD's goal has been to implement a transition to in-person learning through a phased-in approach beginning with our youngest learners. The School Committee is actively working to develop transition indicators (attached), and the District will be providing monthly reports on our progress in meeting established benchmarks. Our first report is scheduled for October 6th. If the School Committee votes to move forward with the transition to the hybrid model ([outlined in our reopening plan](#)) our target time frame for transitioning to the hybrid at the elementary level is mid-October. At this time grades 6-12 will continue to schedule outdoor onsite meetings for secondary students throughout the first semester with a target implementation of the hybrid model to begin in January 2021. Updates to the timeline resulting from School Committee deliberations at the October 6, 2020 meeting will be submitted to the Department of Education and posted on the [MERSD Reentry website](#) (<https://www.mersd.org/Page/1513>).

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Pamela Beaudoin', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Pamela Beaudoin
Superintendent

Hybrid Planning Timeline

- September 1 – *Indicator Development*
- September 15 – Indicator Finalization
- October 5 – 1st Monthly Report on Indicators

Indicators for Move to Hybrid – Draft for Consideration 9.15.20

Key

Once implemented, won't change
Fluid indicator – needs to be monitored daily/weekly

Health & Safety		Elementary	Middle	High	Cost
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • COVID Level – Map & State Ranking System (Unshaded/Green) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Essex County status https://www.mass.gov/info-details/community-level-covid-19-data-reporting - concern is that this is a lagging indicator so MERSD will maintain regular contact with local BOH in MBTS and Essex for any local indicators. Invite BOH reps to collaboration mtg. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ MERSD community/Athletics is representative of many EC communities 	✓	Color (green or white) code from state map			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implementation of Safety Guidelines / HVAC & Systems <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Seasonal requirements 	—	Summer/Fall work complete			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Local Tracing Capacity</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ <i>See state capability here</i> https://covidactnow.org/state/MA?s=995205: <i>Put MA State</i> 	✗	Essex and MBTS need to work with			

<p><i>resource here. 100% on 9.3.20</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Through the CTC. Essex has had poor response from CTC when requested. Took 2 days to pick up a case in the summer and for another request for information. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ With 305 new daily cases on average, Massachusetts needs an estimated 1,525 contact tracers on staff to trace each new case to a known case within 48 hours of detection. Per our best available data, Massachusetts has 2,091 contact tracers, fulfilling 100% of this staffing requirement. Sufficient staff alone does not guarantee successful contact tracing. Massachusetts will need to ensure the contact tracing program is run effectively and that testing with short test result turnaround time is widely available. ▪ Last updated 9/3/2020. Experts recommend that at least 90% of contacts for each new case must be traced within 48 hours in order to contain COVID. Experts estimate that tracing each new case within 48 hours requires an average of 5 contact tracers per new case, as well as fast testing. Learn more about our methodology and our data sources (for contact tracing data, we partner with testandtrace.com). Learn about recent changes to how we assess contact tracing. We know that measuring contact tracing capacity solely by the number of staff is not reliable, and we are working on a more accurate metric to assess contact tracing capacity. 		<p>CTC on improving response rate. Propose this conversation should happen between BOHs and CTC—raise at collaboration.</p>			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Surveillance (rapid and frequent) Testing Availability</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ <i>Batch testing</i> ○ <i>Some districts, colleges, and universities are using this testing as a preventative measure to continually monitor and stave off large scale infections</i> 	<p>Investigating</p>	<p>✘</p>			<p>\$\$</p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ allocate funding for regular proactive testing for teachers, staff and students in our schools; ▪ support school districts to identify and procure appropriate testing strategies and supplies, which may include low cost, low sensitivity tests to be used at high frequencies; and ▪ mandate that the MA Department of Public Health and local public health departments provide real-time data for decision-making including daily updates on the number and rates of new COVID-19 cases, percent positive tests for SARSCoV-2, and exposed contacts in their district. 					
Program					
<p>Middle High School</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hybrid – Need cohort size expansion to 60 or greater for Middle High School, (teacher exposure = 120 students) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Existing parameter is 12 students at 6’ – max cohort of 24 students. (Teacher exposure = 48 students) ◦ Concern: Current state guidelines for gathering is 10 people per 1,000 feet • Remote (full) educational program continues, despite the learning model 	✘				
<p>Elementary</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Instructional supports are flexible and functional and can be enabled in hybrid and remote models during transitions in an effort to maintain program integrity • Meet time on learning (TOL) goal (grade level) for hybrid schools. 	—	<p>What is the TOL goal? 900 hours for year</p>			
Staffing					

• All grade level classrooms identified for hybrid staffed by a teacher	—	Yes or no			
• Two General TA / subs per building in hybrid – sub coverage <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o This is a permanent sub who is expected to be in the building and poised to be deployed to a classroom for short-term needs 	✗	Yes or no			\$\$
• <i>Elementary only - One General TA per hybrid classroom for student management support</i>	✗	Yes or no			\$\$
• Nurse & Nurse Assistant (if hybrid) per building in hybrid	✗	Yes or no			\$\$
• Bus Monitors	✗	5			\$100,000
Financial					
• Agreement on budget total and source of funding for hybrid implementation costs – prefer design-to-budget	—				

Italicized items are ideas for discussion not defined needs