



MALDEN PUBLIC SCHOOLS
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Dear Malden Public School Families,

On Thursday, August 6, the Malden School Committee unanimously voted to begin the 2020-2021 school year in a remote manner. We appreciate all of the thoughts, feelings, and feedback that we have received from our families. Much has happened over the last few months, and I am writing to provide some context and share with you the details of the work that continues to happen over the summer weeks.

As we began to plan for all possible scenarios for the start of the 2020-2021 academic year, we sought out input from families and commissioned a re-entry task force with a cross section of key stakeholders, including students, parents, teachers, administrators, counselors, representatives from the facilities department, and city health and safety officials. Understanding that the pandemic has affected our diverse learning community in so many ways, we wanted to hear firsthand from the many stakeholders who experienced teaching and learning during this challenging time. To gain a sense of needs that would inform our work, we launched a survey that generated 3,615 responses from families. More recently, we organized three listening forums where participants offered comments about the fears, challenges, and even successes that have emerged during this period. Whether through comments in the survey or statements made at a listening forum, one theme emerged time and time again: the importance of SAFETY; specifically, the safety of our children during this pandemic. As superintendent, and in collaboration with the Malden School Committee, we have been guided by a firm commitment to the health and safety of both our Malden Public Schools families and staff. Malden and neighboring communities are witnessing an uptick in COVID-19 cases and rising key metrics. Wisely, our School Committee voted to begin the year remotely.

What will this mean for families in September? The official start to the school year will now be Wednesday, September 16. For incoming kindergarten students, screenings will take place on Thursday and Friday, September 17 and 18; over the next few weeks, we will continue to consider ways to accomplish this task in light of the remote start to the year. The Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) has reduced the number of required school days

from 180 to 170 and has designated the first ten days of the school calendar for staff professional development.

In order to guarantee that our families are able to access the remote learning, we are taking steps to ensure that every student, PreK-12 will have a Chromebook or device to use. In addition, we are making plans to offer training and assistance in using those devices. Knowing that internet access is also essential, we will be providing a hotspot to families in need of one. We will begin a distribution program before school starts.

This spring we were all thrown together into a period of “crisis learning,” while we reacted to the pandemic and the changes it brought to our community. Our amazing staff, families, and students came together to make the most of that situation in many creative and beneficial ways. Now, we are confident that as we start the 2020-2021 school year in a more thoughtful and proactive manner, our remote learning will be very robust and will more closely resemble the full day of school our students and families are used to. There will be a combination of synchronous (real time) and asynchronous (independent) learning along with the needed supports for all of our students.

As we continue to develop our remote learning plan and negotiate and finalize the details with the Malden Education Association, we continue to maintain that our first priority is and always will be the safety of our community. We will also be aiming to provide services in-person for our highest needs students, in a safe and productive manner.

We appreciate your partnership, continued patience and understanding as we do our best to work through this unprecedented challenge. Expect to see regular updates from the district over the next few weeks, including but not limited to the new academic calendar, technology updates, food service updates, and other relevant information for our families. We look forward to partnering with you throughout this process and making sure the experience for our students is the best that it can be.

Stay safe,

John Oteri