



From the Desk of the Superintendent

Volume IV No.5 NOVEMBER NEWSLETTER NOVEMBER 30, 2020

For timely updates and information... Twitter: @MaldenPublic Website: maldenps.org

School information technology moves to forefront this school year

Efficient, effective and reliable modes are created, monitored in a partnership between school and city tech departments

**By Steve Freker
For the Malden Public Schools**

The head of the city of Malden's information technology (IT) department got right to the point recently. "In the midst of a pandemic, we've been turned on our heads — but we've responded," Anthony Rodrigues said, as he began

a detailed report to the School Committee on the status of the city's IT system as it pertains to the Malden Public Schools. Rodrigues appeared at a recent virtual School Committee meeting at the request of school board technology subcommittee chairperson **See P.3**



Upgrades in school communication technology have been paramount to the success of the Malden Public Schools in its education model this year.

*133rd Malden vs.
Medford Thanksgiving
Game is postponed. P.7*



SUPERINTENDENT'S MESSAGE

Greetings to all in the Malden Public Schools Community, With the holiday season officially under way, I hope that everyone will enjoy their traditions safely with their families, including during the upcoming winter break. Like all parts of this year's COVID-19 impacted calendar, observing traditional holidays has also become a challenge, requiring planning and strategy to fit and adhere to newly-embraced guidelines. We trust that all will use the break from school to re-energize and recharge as we prepare for the rest of the school year. **See P.6**



Superintendent John Oteri

Saying 'Hello' to some Ferryway First Graders!



The Ferryway K-8 School's first grade class of Ms. Israelson had a very special guest early in the month of November, none other than Malden Mayor Gary Christenson (bottom row, second from left) during the virtual session on Google Classroom. The Mayor, who also serves as chairperson of the Malden School Committee, greeted the students and encouraged them to keep working hard on their studies during these very different and challenging times. *Courtesy Photo*

TRANSITION TALK TUESDAYS

Online, Every Tuesday 2:15-3:00 p.m.

Come and join the conversation. Hear from state and local agencies and speak with the Malden High School Transition Specialist, Kelli Collumb

TUESDAY, DECEMBER 15

Department of Developmental Services
Lauren King / Transition Coordinator

TUESDAY, DECEMBER 22

Communitas, inc. / Paula Thompson, Program Specialist

Brought to you by Malden HS/ Please use this ZOOM Link
<https://zoom.us/j/99124431490?pwd=cmkzZXQ3VWtjdU9TT1Q0cTFSUT09>

GREAT NEWS! Malden Public Schools tabbed for new, statewide IEP Improvement Project

Supt. Oteri announced at the November School Committee meeting that Malden Public Schools has been selected as one of 19 schools/districts in the Commonwealth to serve as Early Adopters for the IEP (Individual Education Plan) Improvement Project. Malden Public Schools will soon get started on this key initiative to advance equity and inclusion. "We will be on the forefront of learning about the best practices and procedures in terms of creating and maintaining IEPs for our students," Supt. Oteri said. "We are really excited to be included. This project is aimed at achievement and equity as well as our students of color and of lower income brackets. All will benefit."

School communication technology takes a major role in education model

Continued from Page One

Joseph Gray for an update. With the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic and schools nationwide reverting to remote learning for the last few months of the school year this past spring, school communication technology has moved to the forefront. The trend has continued at the start of the school year and into the fall as approximately 55 percent of school districts nationwide have remained in remote learning mode, including most students in the Malden Public Schools.

More reliant on technology and how it is used

'We've become more reliant on technology and in the way we use that technology in our schools," said Superintendent of Schools John Oteri. "We introduced Chromebooks districtwide, we upgraded our WiFi system and switched to an entirely new method of instruction without the benefit of any long-term planning." Rodriques explained how the dichotomy of the information technology network for the school system has dramatically shifted with the introduction of the remote learning model.

Since the start of the remote learning model in the spring until the present, the Malden Public Schools have made sure all of its just over 6,200 students have use of personal laptop computer Chromebook devices. Previously, the school department's information technology system was set up to deal with about 3,500 devices communicating internally. High school students had about 1,800 devices in use, as well as in-school devices in some of the middle grades.

With the advent of remote learning districtwide, the number of communication points and the "direction" of the delivery and interaction shifted dramatically. With remote learning, all of the monitoring and interaction was shifted externally, outside of the school buildings and this was a change that happened in a very short time period, Rodriques said.



When the shift to remote learning was made, all of the monitoring and interaction was shifted out of the schools, externally, in a very short period of time. *Courtesy Photo*

IT Director Rodrigues: 'It was uncharted territory'

"It was uncharted territory, but we adapted," Rodrigues said, explaining that upgrades and changes were made, including the increased use of "cloud" technology. Cloud use is when digital resources are stored in the virtual space by way of networks, often satellite networks. It allows people to share information and applications across the internet without over-taxing or being restricted by physical equipment or locations. The main use of the cloud technology is in external authentication, Rodrigues said, which enables the IT system to identify quicker and more efficiently the increased number of points of contact that are now in play externally.

A recent upgrade "shifted geography in 72 hours, which was a big accomplishment," Rodrigues said. "We now have capacity to handle 9,000 external connections seamlessly, which surpasses what we require on a daily basis. Rodrigues said he works closely with all city departments, including the school department, and that the relationship has led to a successful adaptation to the newest form of learning for local students.

"It's been a daunting task to shift this operation so quickly," Rodrigues said. "There have been some brief interruptions in services as we've gone along, but overall we have been successful. We also have enough IP space to grow, if needed. "We have had some hiccups, but we've never crashed," he added.

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New College Scholarship is created for Unaccompanied Homeless Youth

Eligible students would have full year of room and board on campus: DESE partnering with state, federal agencies to support students

The Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) is partnering with the Department of Higher Education, the Department of Housing and Community Development, and the Governor's Commission on Unaccompanied Homeless Youth to offer college housing scholarships for homeless students. The new Moving to College Housing Scholarship, funded by the federal Department of Housing and Urban Development, will provide year-round, on-campus housing, as well as a meal plan funded by campuses.

Applicants must be accepted and plan to register at either a participating community college or a state university; those attending a community college would live at the nearest participating

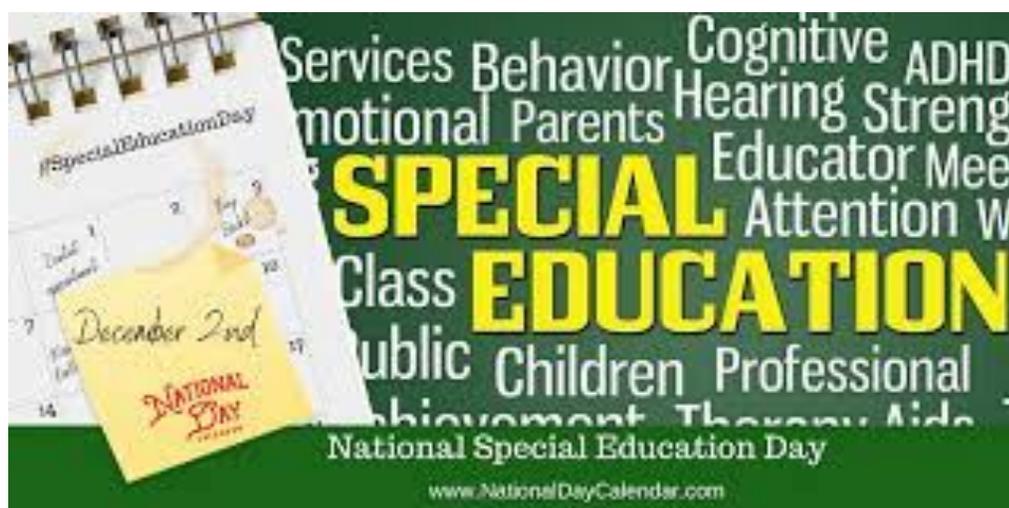


participating state university campus and commute to classes www.doe.mass.edu/sfs/edstability/mtc.html or take classes online. School counselors and McKinney-Vento liaisons are encouraged to help students complete the application, which is due Monday, March 1. For more information and/or access an application online:

www.doe.mass.edu/sfs/edstability/mtc.html

Please visit the new Malden Student Services/Special Education dedicated website:
<https://sites.google.com/maldenps.org/maldenstudentservices/home>

**NATIONAL
SPECIAL
EDUCATION
DAY on
DECEMBER 2**



Malden Public Schools now feature recently-updated HVAC ventilation

In COVID-19 era, air filtration is a key factor in health and safety

By Steve Freker

For the Malden Public Schools

There is not a whole lot that could be said to have "gone right" in 2020, which will forever be recognized as the start of the COVID-19 era. But there were some fortuitous moments, and one of them involved the Malden Public Schools district, which earlier this year marked the completion of some extensive updates and additions to the school buildings' heating, ventilation and air conditioning (HVAC) systems.

Ward Five School Committee member Adam Weldai recalled these capital improvements when he asked about it in a question to Superintendent of Schools John Oteri at a recent School Committee meeting. While many districts are scrambling to update and adapt their older HVAC systems to protect their staff and students from airborne COVID-19 transmission, Malden's public school buildings had already completed extensive overhauls of its equipment in latter part of 2019 and earlier this year.

Most HVAC improvements done before COVID

"Many of these updates were done before COVID was present. Some were already in place dating back to last year," Supt. Oteri said. "Malden High School and the Early Learning Center (ELC) had major HVAC overhauls. We are very happy about that and we are in very good shape."



The most advanced air filters available for schools and large office and governmental buildings, MERV-13 are now in high demand, but were already in place in Malden Public Schools buildings before the pandemic was declared in March.

Courtesy Photo

Beginning as of October 13, a limited number of students have returned to in-person learning in the Malden Public Schools, right around 200 districtwide, and Supt. Oteri said one of the reasons this was possible was the safe condition of air filtration in the buildings. Another positive factor in the air filtration systems now in place is that Malden school buildings are now all equipped with one of the highest density forms of HVAC filters, known as MERV-13. *See Next Page*

Malden Public Schools Mission Statement

Malden Public Schools is a place where students are encouraged to follow their dreams and become well rounded members of our community. The Malden Public Schools prepare students to be independent thinkers and enthusiastic learners who: Work hard; Respect others; Cherish our diversity; Seek challenges; Discover and Develop their individual talents; Strive for academic excellence; and look to Demonstrate personal and social responsibility. Malden Public Schools graduates are prepared to be active participants in our economy and democracy.

SUPERINTENDENT'S

MESSAGE: The #1 priority of our response to the crisis caused by the pandemic has been the safety & well-being of our students, families & our staff, and that will not change

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as we carry on for the final weeks of the calendar year. As I do each year in the holiday season, but particularly this one, which is so challenging and unpredictable, I wish to express my sincere gratitude to our staff of educators, administrators and non-teaching personnel, for all you do for the district and for Malden's children on a daily basis. Our kids, the ones who have been able to return to our buildings, and the ones whom we miss so much in the classrooms, get your your absolute best —every day— and we know that goes far beyond simply academics. As we have all been reminded this year, which has been marked by the arrival and consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic, there is no more valuable commodity than time. Like every other facet of our lives, the quantity we have to spend, and how we use it, have been subject to change like the wind. I know that all of our educators, administrators and support personnel have made it their mission to use every available minute of their time to work toward providing our students with quality learning time, no matter the obstacles. We miss our students so much and we look forward to the return of our students and staff to our school buildings when it is safe and prudent to do so. We have made progress toward the goal of full re-entry for in-person learning with the return of about 200 of our highest needs students on October 13. We now have in place plans for our educators and staff to return to our buildings in January. Plans also are being worked out for a phased hybrid learning model to be introduced in the district, by grade levels. The month of December brings us holiday celebrations for many faiths and we hope our students, families and staff find joy as they follow their traditions. Please accept my most heartfelt wishes for a safe and healthy holiday season from the Malden Public Schools!

Superintendent John Oteri

The most up-to-date air filtration equipment in place for MPS

Continued from Previous Page

The MERV-13 filters have been deemed highly-recommended by public health agencies for use in large, indoor spaces such as school buildings to fight the airborne spread of coronavirus. This had led to a rush of demand for the MERV-13 filters since over this past summer and a subsequent shortage.

The MERV filtration rating system measures a filter's ability to remove small particulates from the air: The higher the rating number, the smaller the particles a filter can catch. MERV-13 captures 95-99% of all airborne particulates, according to its manufacturer, AAF International. The filter density strength ranges from MERV 1-16 and most buildings nationwide have used MERV-8 as the standard, according to a *Fortune* magazine article in August. The U.S. Centers for Disease Control (CDC) has recommended since early May that office buildings and other indoor spaces upgrade their air filters to MERV-13, based on guidance from the American Society of Heating, Refrigerating and Air-Conditioning Engineers (ASHRAE).

Supt. Oteri told the Malden School Committee that MERV-13 filters were installed and in place in Malden school buildings "before the pandemic," through projects under the guidance of Honeywell. "In speaking with colleagues in other districts, everyone is seeking out the MERV-13 filters, but a lot of the HVAC systems in other districts may be 30-40 years old and the new filters cannot be used until the older systems are updated. "We are fortunate as a district. Our buildings are in good shape," Supt. Oteri said.

Malden's Director of Public Facilities Eric Rubin recalled these improvements in a recent correspondence to Malden Public Schools educators and staff. "As you are all well aware, COVID 19 has placed a greater emphasis than ever on the importance of air flow, ventilation and filtration," Rubin stated. "We are fortunate that all of our school buildings have HVAC systems that are fairly modern. In addition, for the past 12 months many of our properties have been going through a major upgrade as part of a contract to upgrade our buildings systems. "These upgrades have included mechanical equipment, building management systems, variable speed pumps, heating equipment and lighting to name a few," Rubin added.

The Malden Public Schools: 'Our Diversity is Our Strength'

The Malden school district is ranked #1 as the most culturally diverse by *niche.com* in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, with Malden High School rated the #1 most culturally diverse secondary education school overall. Throughout the district, all educators, administrators and students are unified in our stated mission to cherish and embrace our diversity, striving for excellence in the classroom and beyond.



Players celebrate last year's 29-0 win over Medford with the trophy!

For the first time since 1889, there was no iconic Malden-Medford game on Turkey Day due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Football was on the shelf for Malden and all HS teams this fall. It would have been Game #133

A POSITIVE SCHOOL CULTURE

IS REPRESENTATIVE OF THE COMMON LANGUAGE USED, EXEMPLIFYING

THE BELIEFS, VALUES, STRENGTHS IN RELATIONSHIPS

AND RESPECT FOR DIVERSITY IN THE COMMUNITY

In these trying times, there is help in the form of mental health resources

Assistance available from state-based, national agencies

Mental Health Resources

From the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMSHA)

- National Help Line (1-800-662-4357)
- Disaster Distress Helpline (1-800-985-5990 or text TalkWithUs to 66746)
- Treatment locators is a free directory to help find local options for care
 - Substance Use ([FindTreatment.gov](https://www.findtreatment.gov))
 - Behavioral Health Treatment ([findtreatment.samhsa.gov](https://www.findtreatment.samhsa.gov))

Massachusetts state resource phone lines and webpages: Massachusetts 2-1-1 line (dial 2-1-1) 2-1-1 HelpSteps page

Network of Care Massachusetts is a comprehensive statewide online resource to help patients find information on mental health supports and services in their community. [massachusetts.networkofcare.org](https://www.massachusetts.networkofcare.org)

The Massachusetts Department of Mental Health Multilingual Resources page ([mass.gov](https://www.mass.gov)) offers non-English information for coping with stress and other behavioral health conditions during the COVID-19 public health crisis.

MCPAP for Moms [mcpapformoms.org](https://www.mcpapformoms.org) provides mental health resources for expectant mothers and families

The NAMI Massachusetts COMPASS provides a mental health resource phone hotline and email address. [namimass.org](https://www.namimass.org)

NAMI Massachusetts also published a region-based list of Emergency Service Providers (ESPs) to provide assistance with mental health crises

NAMI Massachusetts also hosts virtual support groups for individuals and families dealing with mental illness during the state of emergency - the Connection Recovery Support Group and Family Support Groups



A helpful way to find help for a variety of needs is by using the Treatment Locator from the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMSHA).

Visit the Children's Mental Health Campaign COVID-19 Resource Page for information specific to assisting children with behavioral health needs and additional resources.

[HandholdMA.org](https://www.handholdma.org) (877-382-1609) If you are worried your child is experiencing a mental health crisis.

[samaritanshope.org](https://www.samaritanshope.org)/ 24/7 Crisis hotline. Calls or texts (877-870-4673)

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline 24/7: 800-273-8255

Addiction Treatment and Recovery Resources

MA Help Line (1-800-327-5050) is a toll free phone line statewide, public resource for finding substance use treatment and recovery services.

Malden Overcoming Addiction [maldenovercomingaddiction.com](https://www.maldenovercomingaddiction.com)

The Grayken Center for Addiction at Boston Medical Center has COVID-19 specific resources for seeking addiction care

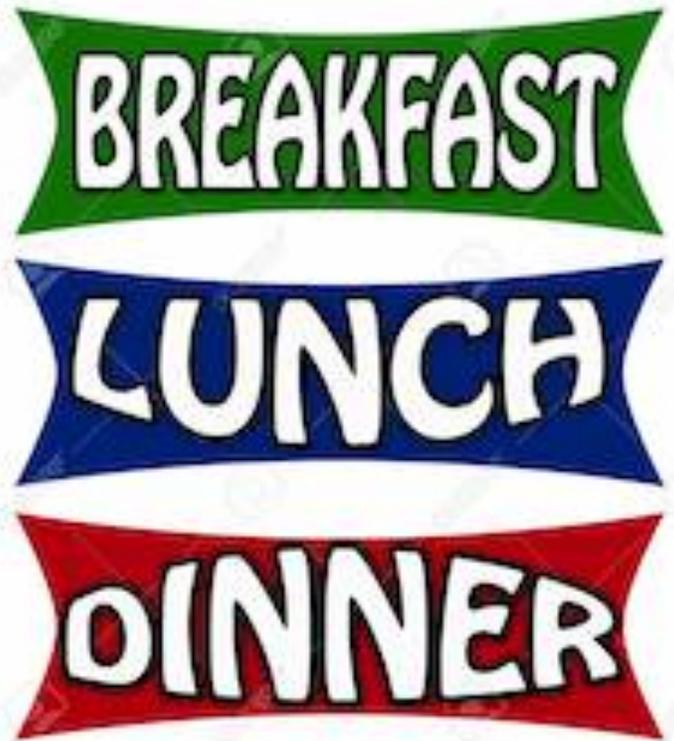
Rize Massachusetts' resources page provides a variety of recommendations for recovery resources.

Health Resources in Action published an informative guide to recovery resources for reference during times of COVID-19 emergency.

Shatterproof, a national advocacy organization for recovery supports, offers a virtual recovery meeting guide.

Three Free meals (breakfast, lunch & dinner) for all students who reside in Malden are now available at ALL FIVE K-8 Schools and @ Malden HS, from Monday-Friday, 10:30 a.m.-1 p.m.

The Malden Public Schools continues to provide free meals, every weekday, Monday through Friday, from 10:30 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. at all five of our K-8 schools: Beebe School, Ferryway School, Forestdale School, Linden School, Salemwood School and Malden High School. At this time, three meals may be picked up at one stop for each student in a household. Breakfast, lunch and dinner are now provided. Also, on Fridays, free meals for the weekend days (Saturday and Sunday) can be picked up. The meals are free for all Malden Public Schools and any student of any school who resides in Malden. More information is available at: www.maldenps.org.



The Malden Public Library is hosting a FREE English Conversation Class for adults every Wednesday from 1-2pm via Zoom. The instructors will discuss daily life & learn new vocabulary. Learn English at home on your computer, phone, or tablet. You must register for the class. For more information E-mail Stacy at: mplenglishclass@gmail.com

To register e-mail: mplenglishclass@gmail.com

SCHOOL INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY HAS EVOLVED DUE TO REMOTE LEARNING *Cont. from Page 3*

"I would not ever have foreseen this degree of (internet) traffic that we now handle (with the schools), but we've adapted. Malden is faring far better than most (districts) due to the technology investment we have made." Supt. Oteri and Rodrigues both acknowledged the value of the outside agency Help Desk available to all Malden Public School families if they have issues using Chromebook devices, many of them who are first-time users. The Help Desk can be accessed by calling 781-709-8080 and is available 8:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m. Monday through Friday.

If someone needs help they can also go to the Malden Public Schools website and click on link for a real-time online chat. Supt. Oteri also told the School Committee that Malden Public Schools has also provided nearly 400 WiFi internet accessing "hotpots" at no charge to families who had no or weak internet service, which complement the individual devices. He acknowledged the work being done by administration, educators and staff to assist families in navigating the remote learning system. "In many ways the system we now use resembles a small college or community college with the online aspect and our technology staff is stretched out. The complexity increases when the devices are not here in the buildings. We have adjusted, but we may need a plan in the future," Supt. Oteri added.

2020-2021 MALDEN PUBLIC SCHOOLS CALENDAR

MALDEN PUBLIC SCHOOLS 2020-2021 SCHOOL CALENDAR

AUGUST 2020				
(0 Day)				
M	T	W	T	F
31*				

8/31* First Day for Teachers

SEPTEMBER 2020				
(11 Days)				
M	T	W	T	F
	1*	2*	3*	X
X	8*	9*	10*	11*
14*	15*	16	17	18
21	22	23	24	25
28	29	30		

9/1-15* Prof Dev Days - All Grds
9/4 No School
9/7 Labor Day
9/16* First Day of School for Grades PreK, 1-12
9/17-18 Kindergarten Orientation/Screening
9/21 First Day of School for Kindergarten

OCTOBER 2020				
(21 Days)				
M	T	W	T	F
			1	2
5	6	7	8	9
X	13	14	15	16
19	20	21	22	23
26	27	28	29	30

10/9 PD Early Dismissal PreK-12
10/12 Columbus Day
10/19 Late Entry Day MHS

NOVEMBER 2020				
(17 Days)				
M	T	W	T	F
2	3*	4	5	6
9	10	X	12	13
16	17	18	19	20
23	24	25	X	X
30				

11/2 Late Day Entry MHS
11/3* Prof Dev Day-All Grds
11/11 Veterans Day
11/25 11:00 Dismissal - Thanksgiving
11/26-27 Thanksgiving

DECEMBER 2020				
(17 Days)				
M	T	W	T	F
	1	2	3	4
7	8	9	10	11
14	15	16	17	18
21	22	23	X	X
X	X	X	X	

12/7 Late Entry MHS
12/23 11:00 Dismissal
12/24-1/1 Winter Vacation

JANUARY 2021				
(19 Days)				
M	T	W	T	F
				X
4	5	6	7	8
11	12	13	14	15
X	19	20	21	22
25	26	27	28	29

1/4 School Resumes
1/11 Late Entry MHS
1/15 PD Early Dismissal PreK-12
1/18 Martin Luther King Day

FEBRUARY 2021				
(14 Days)				
M	T	W	T	F
1	2	3	4	5
8	9	10	11	12*
X	X	X	X	X
22	23	24	25	26

2/5 PD Early Dismissal PreK-12
2/8 Late Entry MHS
2/12 * Prof Dev Day-All Grds
2/15-19 February Vacation

MARCH 2021				
(22 Days)				
M	T	W	T	F
1	2	3	4	5
8	9	10	11	12*
15	16	17	18	19
22	23	24	25	26
29	30	31		

3/8 Late Entry MHS
3/12 * Prof Dev Day-All Grds

APRIL 2021				
(17 Days)				
M	T	W	T	F
			1	2
5	6	7	8	9
12	13	14	15	16
X	X	X	X	X
26	27	28	29	30

4/2 11:00 Dismissal - Good Friday
4/5 Late Entry MHS
4/19-23 Spring Vacation

MAY 2021				
(20 Days)				
M	T	W	T	F
3	4	5	6	7
10	11	12	13	14
17	18	19	20	21
24	25	26	27	28
X				

5/7 PD Early Dismissal PreK-12
5/10 Late Entry MHS
5/31 Memorial Day

JUNE 2021				
(12 Days)				
M	T	W	T	F
	1	2	3	4
7	8	9	10	11
14	15	16	17*	X
21	22	23	24	25

6/4 PD Early Dismissal PreK-12
6/16 Last day w/o snow days (170 Days) - 11:00 Dismissal
6/17 * Prof Dev Day-All Grds
6/18 Juneteenth (No School)
6/25 Last day w/five snow days -11:00 Dismissal

First Day for Teachers – Monday, August 31, 2020

Please note that five (5) additional days are built into the calendar in case of inclement weather

- Early Release PreK-12
- Late Entry Dates for High School