

March 24, 2021

Dear Malden School Community,

Earlier this month, the Massachusetts Board of Elementary & Secondary Education and the Department of Elementary & Secondary Education (DESE) [announced a requirement](#) that all K-5 students must return to full-time in-person learning by April 5.

On Monday, March 15, the Malden School Committee voted unanimously to direct the Malden Public Schools to seek a waiver to delay the return of K-5 students for full in-person instruction. This waiver has been denied by DESE officials in a letter sent to the district today.

The positive experience MPS has had in providing hybrid instruction to PK-4 students over the past several weeks was a factor in DESE's decision. Our principals, educators, and staff have done an incredible job preparing our buildings for in-person learning. We remain extremely grateful for their efforts.

As a result of the state's decision, MPS will begin **in-person instruction, five days per week, for grades K-5 on Monday, April 5**. Additionally, students in **grades 6-8 will begin in-person learning five days per week on Wednesday, April 28**.

To learn more, I invite you to attend our **virtual town hall forum on Tuesday, March 30, at 6:00 p.m.** During the forum, we will explain the impact of the waiver denial and provide additional information related to the return of students to our buildings.

You can attend the forum through the following Zoom link:

<https://cityofmalden.zoom.us/j/94724675068?pwd=Y0NoSG90bGtsQ2NMeDhYcG9sT3RKdz09>

Passcode: 297405

Or One tap mobile: US: +16465189805,,94724675068# or +19294362866,,94724675068#

Or Telephone: Dial: US: +1 646 518 9805 or +1 929 436 2866

Webinar ID: 947 2467 5068

We will provide further updates in advance of next week's town hall meeting.

For now, we continue to work to reconfigure classrooms to meet the latest guidance from the Massachusetts Department of Public Health and [World Health Organization](#), which calls for maintaining at least 3 feet of distancing between students in schools.

Pool testing is also underway in our schools. This process involves combining test samples from several people and conducting a single laboratory test on the combined pool of samples to detect the virus that causes COVID-19. Pooling is a good way to determine if there is significant spread among our school community while using fewer testing resources.

Finally, we are working with the Massachusetts Association of School Superintendents to advocate for prioritized vaccinations for all our educators and staff. We are pleased to share that increasing numbers of our staff already have received their first dose. Giving all staff the opportunity to get vaccinated is a key component to our efforts to reopen our schools safely.

As we have said many times before, we truly appreciate your flexibility and patience as we have managed the effects of the pandemic. If you have any questions about next steps, please contact your child's school principal.

Sincerely,

John Oteri, Superintendent  
Malden Public Schools