

Dear Belmont Families,

I am pleased to be able to share the first set of recommendations from our Return to In-Person Learning Working Group. In compliance with Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) guidance, we will be opening our elementary schools for a full-time, in-person return of K-4 students by April 5, 2021. We will simultaneously maintain a remote option for our remote learners. The hybrid option will end.

The in-person educational experience for K-4 students will:

- Have students in school 5 days/week with the same timing as our pre-Covid school schedule;
- Offer academics, specials, lunch, and snack as part of the school day;
- Include specialized instruction for students with disabilities and students who are English learners;
- Provide bus transportation in accordance with DESE guidance;
- Implement classroom capacity, individual distancing, and quarantining requirements from CDC and DESE guidance.

The remote schooling option will similarly include academics, specials, and specialized instruction, with particular attention paid to community-building among remote learners.

Further details and discussion can be found [here](#). DESE's most recent guidance can be found [here](#). We will also host a Q&A session on Thursday from 6:30-8:00pm for our elementary K-4 families only. Elementary families will receive a survey on Friday morning and will be asked to make a remote/in-person choice by Tuesday, March 16 at 5pm.

I would like to thank the members of our Return to In-Person Learning Working Group for the thoughtful way in which they collaborated on these recommendations. In this complicated environment with frequently changing guidance, they wrestled with the pros and cons of all possible options. While we still have some outstanding issues to figure out, the Working Group has put us on the path to a successful in-person return. The group will now turn its attention to students at Chenery and the High School.

At last night's meeting the School Committee expressed support for our plan. I will now work with our principals and educators to operationalize the plan and prepare for the full return of our elementary learners. I appreciate, as always, their willingness to absorb yet another change in schedule in order to support the best educational experience for our students.

I recognize that this change may be difficult for some students and families, particularly those who are comfortable with our current options. Our plan will require some students – both in-person and remote – to change classrooms, and I truly understand how difficult that can be, especially in the context of an already tumultuous year. Please know that the Working Group understands this and made the best choices it could on behalf of our community. I will work diligently to minimize disruption as much as possible as we move into this next phase of our year.

I welcome your feedback and am available for any questions or concerns.

Respectfully,

John P. Phelan
Superintendent of Schools
Belmont, Massachusetts