



Return to In-Person Learning Working Group Recommendations

K-4 Recommendations | March 8, 2021



Agenda

- Why full in-person now?
- Recommendations for K-4 full in-person model
- Recommendations for corresponding K-4 remote model
- Analysis: Trade-offs of recommendations
- Next steps



Summary: Recommendations for K-4 Full Return

- Bring all K-4 students back to full-in person school by April 5, 2021 in accordance with DESE requirements in a model that 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; and
- Offer a fully remote option for K-4 students that includes academics, specials, and specialized instruction, with particular attention paid to community-building among remote learners; and
- Eliminate the hybrid school option for K-4 students.



Return to In-Person Learning Working Group Recommendations

Why Full In-Person Now?



Why Full In-Person Now?

- Established Return to In-Person Learning Working Group (Jan 2021)
- Health metrics moved into CDC “yellow” (Feb 22, 2021)
- Facilities investments (Aug 2020 onwards; ongoing)
- New CDC Guidance (Feb 2021)
- Updated DESE Guidance (Feb/Mar 2021)
- MA DESE Board Action (Mar 2021)
- *New Updated DESE Guidance (Mar. 9, 2021)*



Return to In-Person Learning Working Group

Working Group of educators, students, parents/guardians, Board of Health members, School Committee members, and community members who are drafting rolling recommendations that outline a path to full in-person return to school.

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Owen Thomas
Gi Yoon-Huang



Return to In-Person Learning Working Group

Working Group has submitted recommendations that outline a path to full in-person return to school for grades K-4. Recommendations for grades 5, 6-8, 9-12 to come.

Meeting #1 Feb. 22, 2021

Identified barriers and brainstormed potential solutions for expanding in-person learning for Grades K-2

- Extended day
- Extended days/week

Meeting #2 Mar. 1, 2021

Developed proto-recommendations for K-4 full in-person return:

- Remote learning option
- Classroom capacity
- Physical distancing
- Lunch
- Specials
- Specialized instruction
- Transportation

Meeting #3 Mar. 8, 2021

Approved recommendations for K-4 full in-person return with several areas noted as needing further work

Mar. 15, 2021 Meeting & Onwards

Applying K-4 recommendations to grades 5, 6-8, and 9-12 (as appropriate) and problem-solving additional challenges to full in-person return at these grade levels.



Mitigation, Learning Modes, & Community Transmission

CDC provides guidance on mitigation strategies and learning modes based on the **level of community transmission**.

CDC defines level of community transmission defined as:

	Low	Moderate	Substantial	High
Total new cases per 100,000 persons in the past 7 days	0-9	10-49	50-99	≥100
Percentage of positive tests in the past 7 days	<5%	5-7.9%	8-9.9%	≥10%

Belmont’s Level of Community Transmission (3/8/2021)

Total new cases per 100,000 persons in the past 7 days	32.96	Moderate
Percentage of positive tests in the past 7 days	~0.82%	Low

Calculations determined by Belmont Board of Health. **Note:** CDC metrics are *different* than MA metrics/levels.

Sources: Center for Disease Control. (2021a). [CDC’s Operational Strategy for K-12 Schools through Phased Mitigation.](#)



Level of Community Transmission Over Last Month

Level of Community Transmission Metrics Belmont, MA

Date	Total New Cases per 100,000 persons (last 7 days)	Percentage of Positive Tests (last 7 days)*	Belmont's Level of Community Transmission	CDC Recommended Instructional Mode (Elementary)	CDC Recommended Instructional Mode (MS & HS)	CDC Recommendations re: Physical Distancing
3-8-2021	32.96	0.82%	Moderate	Full in-person instruction	Full in-person instruction	6'+ to greatest extent possible
3-1-2021	40.28	0.98%	Moderate	Full in-person instruction	Full in-person instruction	6'+ to greatest extent possible
2-22-2021	47.6	1.43%	Moderate	Full in-person instruction	Full in-person instruction	6'+ to greatest extent possible
2-15-2021	65.92	1.85%	Substantial	Hybrid mode	Hybrid mode	6'+ required
2-8-2021	113.53	2.42%	High	Hybrid mode	Virtual only unless strict mitigation	6'+ required
2-1-2021	124.51	3.01%	High	Hybrid mode	Virtual only unless strict mitigation	6'+ required



Belmont has experienced a steady reduction in Level of Community Transmission since February 1st.



Moving into the **Moderate** transmission level corresponds to changes in recommended instructional mode (*full in-person*) and physical distancing (*6'+ to the greatest extent possible*).



Sources: Center for Disease Control. (2021a). [CDC's Operational Strategy for K-12 Schools through Phased Mitigation.](#)



Mitigation, Learning Modes, & Community Transmission

Recommended Implementation of Mitigation Strategies and K-12 School Learning Modes by Level of Community Transmission

Low Transmission ¹ Blue	Moderate Transmission Yellow	Substantial Transmission Orange	High Transmission Red
All schools: Universal and correct use of masks is required; implementing other key mitigation strategies: handwashing and respiratory etiquette; cleaning and maintaining healthy facilities; contact tracing, and diagnostic testing ² in combination with quarantine and isolation.			
K-12 schools open for full in-person instruction Physical distancing of 6 feet or more to the greatest extent possible ³		Elementary schools in hybrid mode ⁴ ; physical distancing of 6 feet or more required	Middle and high schools in virtual only instruction unless they can strictly implement all mitigation strategies, and have few cases; schools that are already open for in-person instruction can remain open, but only if they strictly implement mitigation strategies and have few cases ⁵
		Middle and high schools in hybrid learning mode or reduced attendance Physical distancing of 6 feet or more is required	
Sports and extracurricular activities with masks required; physical distancing of 6 feet or more to the greatest extent possible ⁶	Sports and extracurricular activities with masks and physical distancing of 6 feet or more required	Sports and extracurricular activities occur only if they can be held outdoors, with masks and physical distancing of 6 feet or more required	Sports and extracurricular activities virtual only

Belmont currently falls in the **Low / Moderate** transmission categories. →

Sources: Center for Disease Control. (2021a). [CDC's Operational Strategy for K-12 Schools through Phased Mitigation.](#)



Commissioner's Update

- Feb. 23: Commissioner Riley called for a “phased in approach” for in-person learning, beginning with elementary students.
- March 5: Board of Ed. voted to give him authority to impose a return plan for all schools across the Commonwealth
 - All districts to implement a full in-person and a full remote option (and eliminate hybrid options) for elementary students by April 5.
 - Remote option to be offered only through end of 2020-2021 school year.



Commissioner's Update (cont'd)

- The Commissioner has outlined *general ideas* which include:
 - Full day duration, including lunch at school
 - Full week (i.e. 5 days / week) scope
 - Provide a minimum of 3 feet distancing and a recommended distance of 6 feet where feasible between students
- Commissioner released *specific guidance* at **3pm today** (Mar. 9); superintendent/commissioner call (Wednesday, Mar. 10)



Commissioner's Update (cont'd)

“For many districts, this will be a substantial programming shift mid-school year. Families should expect that districts may need to make challenging tradeoffs to accommodate the full in-person instructional mode. For instance, if students are currently learning in a hybrid model, the shift to more in-person days may require changes in classroom learning spaces and, in some cases, teacher-student assignments. If students are currently in a remote model or choose to learn remotely when these new requirements go into effect, the remote learning option may look different than the model offered prior to the implementation of these new requirements.”

~ Updated DESE Guidance (Mar. 9, 2021; p. 6)



Return to In-Person Learning Working Group Recommendations

Recommendations for K-4 Full In-Person Model



Recommendations for K-4 Full In-Person Model

- Hours and structure of school day
- Transportation to school
- Classroom distancing and capacity
- Snack
- Specials
- Specialized Instruction
- Lunch
- Transportation home



Hours & Structure

- Elementary School Hours:
 - M/Tu/Th/F — 8:40 a.m. - 2:50 p.m. | Winn Brook (WB): 8:50 a.m. - 3:00 p.m.
 - W — 8:40 a.m. - 1:40 p.m. | WB: 8:50 a.m. - 1:50 p.m.
- Start date: No later than April 5, 2021
- In-person instruction: All content areas will be taught
- Specials: Will be offered
- Snack and Lunch: Will occur on-site

More information on each of these items provided later in this presentation.



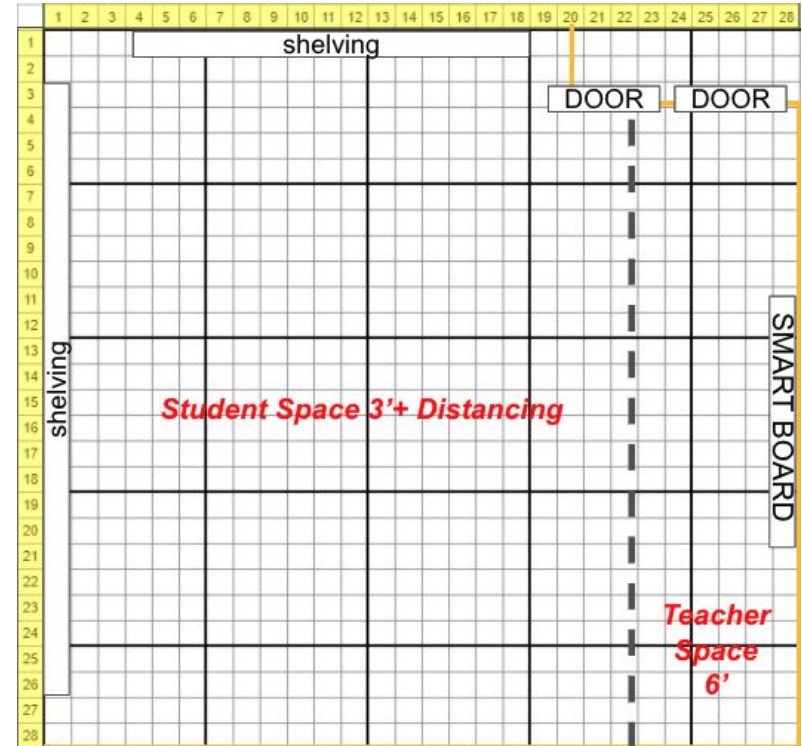
Transportation to School

- Bus capacity: Up to full capacity (consistent with DESE Transportation Guidance)
 - Up to 3 students per bunch
 - Aspirational: 2 students per bench.
- All windows open at all times (at least 2 inches)
- All students must wear masks at all times.
- All students will be assigned to a specific seat.
- Goal: Hire bus monitors for all elementary buses.
 - **Note:** Often difficult to fill these positions.
- Parents are encouraged to provide alternative transportation options for students (family-provided transportation, walking, biking, “walking buses,” etc.).
- **Next steps:** Survey parents to determine if their student(s) will ride the bus.



Classroom: Physical Distancing and Capacity

- General classroom setup:
 - 6' reserved space for teachers
 - 3'+ distancing for students

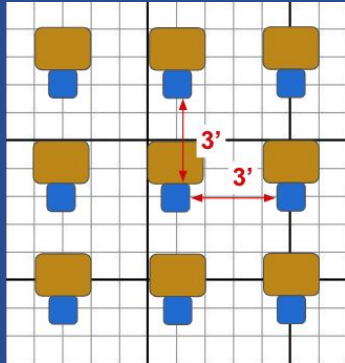




Masked Spectrum of Distancing (per 3/9 DESE Guidance)

MINIMUM DISTANCING

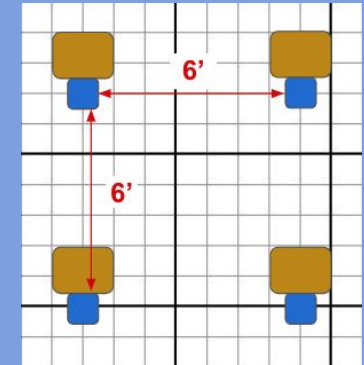
3 feet
edge of chair
to
edge of chair



...Additional expanded distancing options...

Physical distancing in most elementary school classrooms will fall somewhere in this range and will depend on number of in-person students.

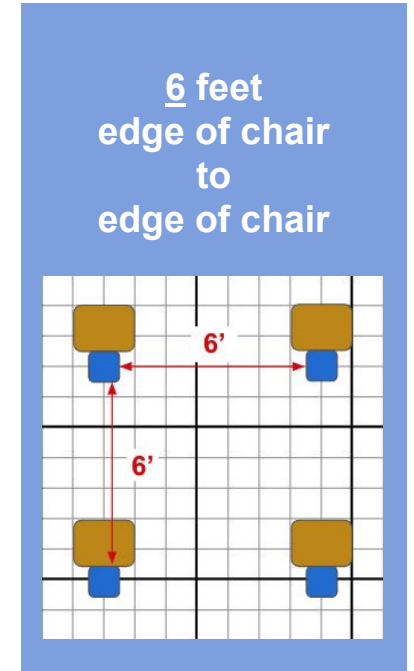
6 feet
edge of chair
to
edge of chair





Unmasked Spectrum of Distancing (per 3/9 DESE Guidance)

- Lunch
- Snack
- Mask breaks





Unmasking for Lunch, Snack, and Mask Breaks

6'+ distancing is required for:

- Lunch
 - Cafe, gym, outdoor tent
 - Multiple lunch rotation/schedule
 - 6 ft. distanced seats
 - Hire lunch aides for supervision (volunteers?)
 - Purchase tables, chairs, tents
 - No talking while unmasked
 - Lunch seating has been modeled with both square & hexagonal arrangements
- Snack & mask breaks



Specials

- All elementary students will have access to grade-level specials in art, music, and PE.
- When feasible, hold specials in outdoor spaces especially when singing in music.
 - When outdoors is not feasible, use self-contained classrooms for art and music and the gym for PE.
 - Consider school-specific location for music when singing (e.g., outside, gym) to accommodate masked 10'+ distancing when singing (per updated DESE guidance)



Specialized Instruction

- Specialized instruction (e.g., services for students with disabilities, English learners) will occur for in-person and remote students
- New schedule will be developed to provide specialized instruction through pull-out methods (often previously provided on at-home days in hybrid model) and push-in methods



Return to In-Person Learning Working Group Recommendations

Recommendations for K-4 Remote Option



Recommendations for K-4 Remote Learning

- Utilize remote-only classrooms for K-4 remote learning in Spring 2021
 - This was a really difficult decision. The Working Group grappled with the significant benefits and drawbacks of multiple approaches.
 - Viewed through the lens of what is best for elementary learners, the Working Group recommends remote-only classrooms as our best option for K-4 students and teachers.



Recommendations for K-4 Remote Learners

- Elementary school hours will be the same as for in-person students
- Specials: PE, art, music for all grades; library to the extent possible
- Specialized instruction: New schedule will be developed.
- Dedicated administrative support from district
- Teachers: Current BPS staff + additional hires as needed



Return to In-Person Learning Working Group Recommendations

Trade-Offs of this Full In-Person Return Plan



Trade-Offs of this Full In-Person Return Plan

Benefits	Drawbacks
<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Provides full in-person path forward for K-4 with corresponding remote-only program● More robust and focused learning experience for all students● Empowers teachers to focus on one group of students/modality of teaching● Responsive to the preferences of many teachers, students, and families● Remote families might have more opportunities for affinity groups and cohesion	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Many in-person and remote-only students will be reassigned to a new teacher (potentially 300+ students)● Potential for larger in-person class sizes● Additional supports must be provided for quarantined “in-person” students

This plan has benefits *and* drawbacks — and we believe it is our best path forward for a full return for students.



Return to In-Person Learning Working Group Recommendations

Next Steps



Next Steps: K-4

- **March 9th:** Recommendations presented to School Committee
- **March 11th (6:30pm):** Family Forum -- Q&A Session with School Administrators
- **March 12th:** Survey to all K-4 families asking for remote/ in-person choice (binding through end of school year)
- **March 17th:** Survey due by 5:00pm



Concerns from Working Group Members

The district continues to problem-solve outstanding challenges, including, for example:

- Providing learning support for in-person students who must quarantine at home
- Maximizing distancing on buses



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