

As you are likely aware, this week Haverhill and several neighboring communities have moved into the “Red Zone” due to increasing incidence of COVID19. As a school system we prepared for this scenario during our reopening planning process and have been closely adhering to our safety protocols including mask wearing, hand washing, and physical distancing. In the City of Haverhill many of the new cases have been contained within skilled nursing facilities, however there has also been an increase in the incidence of COVID in the community at large.

We are aware that this change causes additional stress in an already stressful time. Please know that the school district, as recommended by the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) and the Massachusetts Department of Public Health (MDPH), is working closely with our local Department of Public Health to monitor our health state. We have established two guiding bodies, a Medical Advisory Team and a Joint Stakeholders Coronavirus Response Team (JSCRT). The JSCRT members include public health officials, medical professionals, teachers, families school administration and school committee. We are analyzing data daily and meeting routinely to review the impact of that information on our school community and the relative safety of having schools open for in-person learning. As a team we will look at multiple consecutive weekly COVID-19 reports to assess trends in order to inform any changes to our current hybrid learning model.

At this point in time HPS is not making changes to our hybrid learning model and will continue with 2 days of in-person learning this week for those enrolled. However, our learning model will be reassessed weekly as long as the district is “in red”. We are aware the increase in cases has caused some families to prefer to keep their child home from in-person learning until the rate of COVID in the community declines. We are making accommodations for this to happen. If you prefer that your child, who is enrolled in hybrid learning, remain home please let the school know. Your child will be allowed to attend all five days of their assigned classes remotely by signing into to their google classroom account each day and participating on-line.

 It should be noted that the Haverhill Department of Public Health has temporarily halted most youth sports and this impacts many of our high school athletes. We know that this was a difficult decision, but that it was made to help ensure the health of our students and families.

We will keep you posted as to any future decisions or changes that may be made.

Best,

*Margaret Marotta*

Margaret Marotta EdD

Superintendent of Schools

Metrics for Opening Schools/Transitioning Between Learning Models

As recommended by DESE the district will rely on data provided regarding average daily cases per 100,000 over a two-week period which DESE uses as a metric that determines the color-coding for each community.  The color-coding metric and information as to how the data should be interpreted can be found here ([link to DESE guidance)](http://www.doe.mass.edu/covid19/on-desktop.html)  The district will also monitor whether cases are increasing or decreasing as compared to the prior period based upon epidemiological, clinical, laboratory, and case management data utilized for case investigation and surveillance purposes to monitor the local test positivity rate.

The District will follow the guidance issued by DESE regarding implementing a protocol in the event of multiple positive tests.  The guidance provides:

### Protocol: Presence of multiple cases in the school or district

### If there is more than one confirmed COVID-19 case (students or staff) in the school at one time, or if there is a series of single cases in a short time span, school leaders and the superintendent will work with the local board of health to determine if it is likely that there is transmission happening in school.

1. For each individual case,  the school leaders will follow the steps mandated by MDPH and DESE, the individual will follow the protocols established for positive cases, if there is one isolated case, the student’s close contacts will need to follow quarantine guidelines implemented by the Haverhill Health Department.  Close contacts may be required to  be tested, not the whole school.
2. When there is suspected in-school transmission beyond one cohort or a small number of cohorts, school district leaders will consult with the local board of health as to proposed next steps. These steps will include a review of the specific COVID-19 public health metrics for the municipality.
3. Should there be circumstances where there are multiple cases in multiple schools, school district leaders will consult with the local board of health as to proposed next steps.  These steps will include a review of the specific COVID-19 public health metrics for the municipality.
4. Before a final decision is made on a school or district closure, the superintendent will consult with DESE for further guidance, the ultimate decision will rest with the school district and Board of Health.
5. If the decision is made to close for some number of days, the school district will send clear information and instructions to families and staff:
	* Informing them that it is possible COVID-19 is being transmitted in the school and/or district,
	* Noting that there may be more potential cases that are not yet symptomatic,
	* Recommending whether or not students should quarantine and not have contact with others,
	* Reminding families of the importance of not having contact with higher-risk individuals (e.g., grandparents),
	* Reminding families of the list of COVID-19 symptoms for which to monitor, and
	* Ensuring that remote learning is immediately provided to all students.
6. Before bringing students back to school:
	* Check inventory levels of needed supplies (e.g., disposable masks, soap, hand sanitizer, cleaning products); re-order replacement inventory,
	* Consider a school-wide refresher training on the importance of correct hygiene procedures (masks, physical distance, handwashing),
	* Reiterate the critical nature of masks, physical distancing, and hand hygiene when students return to school.

Protocol: Presence of significant number of new cases in a municipality

1. In the case of significant municipal outbreak, as determined by the local board of health or DPH, the superintendent and school leaders will consult with the local board of health to determine whether it is appropriate to close a specific school, schools, or an entire district.
2. Before a final decision is made on a school or district closure, the superintendent will consult with DESE for further guidance.

### Protocol: State-wide changes to reopening phases

1. Early in August, Governor Baker announced that the Commonwealth will remain in Phase 3 of Reopening Massachusetts in significant part to help support an overall environment for the safe return to our schools for as many students, staff and teachers as possible.
2. If Massachusetts moves back into a prior phase, or further changes are made in Phase 3, DESE (in consultation with the Massachusetts COVID-19 Command Center) will communicate with school districts and schools to determine whether in-person school should continue. As the transmission of the virus can vary due to local circumstances and actions, these potential recommendations may be by locality, region or statewide.