

# CANTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS



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**To: Canton Public Schools School Committee**

**From: Dr. Fischer-Mueller, Superintendent**

**Subject: Elementary All-in Model**

**Date: February 24, 2021**

The Canton Public Schools is extremely proud of its school community and how it responded to the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic. Our families, students and staff have embraced and adhered to the COVID-19 protocols to create a safe learning environment, and they have adapted in remarkable fashion to an educational experience that required incredible learning and commitment to best practices in a new model.

As our state and community health metrics continuously improve and in recognition of the profound importance of students attending school in-person, I am writing to propose a shift to the All-in Model in the Learning Continuum through a phased-in approach. The following summary -- and the corresponding slide deck -- captures important considerations as we approach this All-in shift in an intentional and thoughtful manner.

The proposed timeline provides the context and target dates for the All-in shift, while also honoring Governor Baker and Commissioner Riley's recent announcement and goal to have elementary students return in April. These dates are subject to change, but they will serve as guideposts for the school administration and the All-in Steering Committee to work through the many logistical, educational, and safety-related nuances to promote a successful transition to All-in for our elementary school students.

The phase-in approach for All-in will start with the youngest levels, as they require the greatest in-person support developmentally and face the greatest challenge with remote learning. However, to be clear, we enter this All-in shift with urgency and importance for all levels, with the intention of all grades returning to All-in by the end of the year.

In the development of the [Canton Public Schools Reopening Plan](#) and as we approached the start of school in September, the Conditions for Learning served as a key structure to examine what is best for our school community. Our family and staff surveys used the Conditions for Learning to guide our questions and feedback. Now, as we approach this All-in shift, we return to the Conditions for Learning to once again provide the framework to guide our work.

## Safety

Safety continues to be the top priority as we prepare for an All-in shift. By establishing and adhering to COVID-19 protocols around quarantining, identification of close contacts, mask wearing, social distancing, hand hygiene, daily

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screening, and enhanced cleaning, we successfully mitigated in-school transmission and created a safe learning environment for staff and students. Air purifiers are in every classroom and office space, and we conduct regular air quality tests to ensure everyone's safety. Additionally, our weekly discussions with local health and safety officials provide important guidance for our school-based activities, and our CPS COVID-19 Dashboard allows us to convey the current health data twice a week to the school community.

All of these strong safety measures will remain in place. As we prepare to shift to All-in, CPS will be implementing several additional safety moves to enhance the current mitigation strategies. For example:

- Pooled testing
- Highly recommending double masks
- Parent/Guardian Self Attestation Form for the Daily Screener
- Expanding the Daily Screener questions to consider symptomatic elements in the household
- Using outdoor spaces
- Ongoing vaccinations

## **Teaching and Learning**

The Hybrid Model has presented many instructional challenges, and our educators have done an amazing job utilizing best practices to engage our students in learning both at home and at school. Teaching and learning in an All-in Model will require some additional re-envisioning. Our All-in Model *in the elementary grades* will allow our teachers to focus on the needs of their students in person, *with the removal of the "window" into the classroom*. While the "window" served its purpose during Hybrid Model instruction, our All-in Model will be designed around maximizing attention to in-class instructional practices. As we design learning experiences for in-person learning, our educators will be challenged to consider the best instructional strategies to utilize that will maximize student engagement and small groups, while maintaining safe social distancing and limiting the sharing of materials.

We have learned a lot in the past year and made great advances in our use of technology and new teaching resources. Our educators will need the time and space to collaborate as they prepare for and implement lessons in this next phase of our work. The design of lessons, the preparation of materials, and staff collaboration will continue to be the focus on their Wednesday afternoons. In the All-in Model, Wednesdays will continue to be half days. Additionally, there may be adjustments to the student schedules during the day to prioritize instruction while also allowing for additional mask and movement breaks that may be needed with more students in attendance in each classroom space.

## **Social Emotional Supports**

*The All-in Model is the strongest social emotional support we can provide to our students.* The research shows us that students who have not attended school in-person are struggling the most with self-regulation and coping skills. Schools are a place of structure where students can feel safe to learn and where we can provide the direct support students need.

As a school community, we have many structures and personnel in place who are able to work with students. Our home-school interventionists have had an increase of home visits to support families in need this school year. They have also been providing a monthly evening parent/guardian group.

As the year has progressed, we have had more requests to bring in students four days a week due to emotional concerns being observed by educators and reported by parents/guardians. Bringing back students to in-school four days a week has

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assisted in our ability to provide direct social/emotional supports for our students. We would like to expand that level of in-person support to the entire school community in the All-in Model.

Further, as we prepare for students to return to school, we are thinking about all of the supports that will be needed for all elementary students. Our student services team has already begun to generate ideas, some of which include, but are not exclusive of:

- Caregiver Support Program around helping parents/guardians support students as they return to school
- In-class meetings/mini lessons by school psychologists to address specific student/class concerns identified by educators
- Beginning- and end-of-day check-ins with students
- Developing small group lunch bunches to support students transitioning back into school
- Collaboration between school nurses and our team of mental health providers to monitor student visits to the nurse for suspected social/emotional concerns

## **Structural Supports and Operations**

In the summer, CPS determined that the Learning Continuum's All-in Model -- at that time -- was not feasible due to many health-related and logistical unknowns, transportation guidance, and safety protocols. Now, building on the success of our safety protocols, adding mitigation strategies, considering evolving health guidance and improving health data, and new transportation guidelines we are presenting the following key Structural Supports and Operations for the All-in Model.

### ***Remote Option and Change of Model Enrollment***

Students currently enrolled in the Remote Learning Pathway will continue to have this learning experience through the end of the school year. Most of the RLP classes are currently filled, and we will only accept new students if space opens up.

Any family who would like to change from the Learning Continuum to fully remote or vice versa will be asked to complete a Model Enrollment Change form. It is important to note that any model shift at this point will be final for the remainder of the year. Also, a model change will involve a teacher change as well. Currently, the Model Change is a 3-week process. Timing of a Model shift at the time of transitioning to the All-in Model will be determined.

### ***Social Distancing in the Classroom***

DESE's fall reopening guidance, which involved high-level input from the medical experts, stated that students wearing masks could be spaced 3 to 6 feet apart in the classroom. The CPS Hybrid Model called for 6 feet of social distancing, while the All-in Model in August used 4.5 feet as a parameter. As we enter this All-in shift, and after completing extensive measuring of classrooms and reviewing current enrollment for each class, students will need to be seated 3 to 6 feet apart -- based on the classroom size and class enrollment -- to make the All-in move feasible. Our proposed structure is aligned with the DESE and CDC guidance given the integration of multiple mitigation strategies.

### ***Transportation***

The DESE updated their transportation guidance on February 11, 2021, allowing more students to ride the bus to and from school. (Please click here for a link to the guidance [DESE Transportation Guidance](#).) The safe transportation of students to and from school is a critical part of achieving the goal of bringing more students back to school. In developing this transportation guidance, the health and safety of students and transportation staff remain our top priorities.

- Elementary Schools - Capacity limitations and physical distancing requirements for students on buses are lifted.

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- Middle and High Schools<sup>1</sup>:
  - Capacity limitations and physical distancing requirements for students on buses are lifted, except for middle and high schools in districts with high community prevalence.
  - For middle and high schools in districts with high community prevalence, capacity limitations and physical distancing requirements on buses are amended to allow 2 students per bus bench.
- Masks - All staff and students on the bus, regardless of age, are required to wear masks at all times.
- Ventilation - Keep windows open at all times during operation at least two inches. In adverse weather conditions, every other window can be opened.

### ***Food Service***

The goal of the District is to maintain a minimum of 6 feet of distancing while students are eating meals. This is the recommendation of both local and state health officials. Masks are removed at meal time and separating students and staff by as much as possible will reduce the probability of spreading the virus.

- Meals will be consumed in all available spaces including in tents outdoors
- Each school may be slightly different, based on available spaces
- Lunch is served in containers making it easy to move to an assigned space
- Elementary school lunch distribution will follow the current GMS model - working very well since September
  - All students will pass through the lunch line in the cafeteria
  - Students will eat in assigned location after picking up meals
  - Discontinue meal delivery to classrooms

### **Technology and Digital Learning**

Since September 2020, our District, both staff and students, have made great strides in the area of technology and digital learning. We built a 1:1 program for students in grades K-9, created consistency in our Learning Management Systems (Seesaw K-2 and Google Classroom 3-12), provided two instructional devices (Acer laptops and iPads) into each classroom setting for educators, and created a digital toolbox of resources, applications, and instructional tools to enhance and support teaching and learning. This new digital environment was built out of necessity to support the Remote and Hybrid Models and the teaching and learning that was required for them. As we approach the All-in Model, educators will build on their professional learning around technology and embrace digital learning tools and resources to broaden the educational experience for our students.

The Technology and Digital Learning teams will be focusing on building upon a 3-prong approach to supporting our classrooms: (1) teachers have digital resources, tools and devices to provide the enhanced and effective blended instruction; (2) students have 1:1 devices and have developed routines and grown significantly in their skill level and confidence learning within a digital environment; and finally (3) the Digital Learning Team, educators in each building have a dedicated faculty member to support their continued learning of blended instruction, their expansion of their own digital instructional toolbox and strategies, and their lesson development and continued professional collaboration.

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<sup>1</sup> Although this is a proposal for elementary schools only, middle and high school transportation guidance is included to support better understanding of the planning going on for the older students.

## Proposed Timeline -- Elementary All-in

### ***Proposed*** Timeline

#### **Grades K, 1, 2**

Fri. 3/19 & Mon. 3/22 - Staff prep days; *no school* for K -2 students

Tues. 3/23 - All-in for K -2 students

Wed. 3/24 - Regular Wednesday Remote Early Release; ***not All-in***

Th. 3/25 and beyond - All-in for K -2 students

***Wed. 4/14 - First Wednesday for All-in K-5 Early Release***

### ***Proposed*** Timeline

#### **Grades 3, 4, 5**

Th. 4/1 & Mon. 4/5 - Staff prep days; *no school* for grades 3 - 5 students

Tues. 4/6 - All-in for grades 3 - 5 students

Wed. 4/7 - Regular Wednesday Remote Early Release; ***not All-in***

Th. 4/8 and beyond - All-in for grades 3 - 5 students

***Wed. 4/14 - First Wednesday for All-in K-5 Early Release***

I am confident that in collaboration with CPS administrators, families, staff and the All-in Steering Committee we will continue to develop and implement this plan for students in our elementary schools. With additional operational and mitigation strategies, we can begin to bring our youngest students back into school and minimize the risk to students, staff and families.

I recommend the School Committee approves this proposal for students in grades K-5 in our elementary schools to shift out of Hybrid into the All-in Model.

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