



June 18, 2020

Dear Portland Public Schools families,

I'm writing to update you on the latest developments in our planning for the 2020-2021 school year. Our Reopening Planning Team has been planning for three possible scenarios for the new school year: a full reopening of school; a partial in-school/partial remote-learning scenario; and full remote learning. A decision on which scenario we'll enact won't take place until early August, when we'll know more about COVID-19-related public health restrictions and Maine Department of Education (MDOE) guidance.

The health and safety of our students, staff and community is our top priority for each plan. Whether we fully or partially return to school, we'll promote personal hygiene practices for students and staff, such as routine hand washing and masks or other face coverings, and post signs encouraging such practices. We'll intensify cleaning, disinfection and ventilation throughout our buildings, promote physical distancing and restrict student sharing of items ranging from food, learning materials and toys to electronic devices. We'll also utilize a daily symptom-check protocol and have plans in place for when a student or staff member gets sick, including closing off areas for at least 24 hours and disinfecting. Also, we'll utilize outdoor space for safety, wellness and learning, when feasible.

Our plans are all grounded in the Portland Public Schools' core values and align with our four Portland Promise goals. Each plan is designed to mitigate learning gaps (Equity), foster wellness and collective efficacy (People), support connectedness and social-emotional health (Whole Student) and advance essential standards (Achievement). They all also prioritize our most marginalized students to ensure they can succeed in each scenario.

Here are some highlights of the three potential scenarios for school this fall:

**Full Reopening:** This scenario would only take place if there are no physical distancing guidelines that prevent all students and staff from returning to school. However, these plans would not be simply "a return to normal." We would not only employ careful, proactive safety protocols, but this plan also calls for improving the way we do school, in such ways as connecting each student with an advisor to ensure each student is known and providing personalized learning for students. Also, older students would have the option for asynchronous remote learning options. In addition, we would develop "snow day" guidance and programming to turn those days into instructional days.

**Partial In-School/Partial Remote Learning:** This hybrid scenario of both in-person school and remote learning would be used if there are physical distancing guidelines in place that would only allow in-person instruction of between 20 percent to 50 percent of the student population on a given day. Each school site would implement intensive safety protocols, aligned to guidelines from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control (CDC), and appropriate for the developmental age the school serves.

In this hybrid scenario, only some students initially would have the option to attend in-person school in smaller groups headed by consistent staff members for up to 2 days per week. Creating smaller groups would require students to do in-person school on a rotating schedule – Mondays and Tuesdays for some students; Thursdays and Fridays for others; with Wednesdays for staff collaboration and planning, student and family communication, and facility cleaning and disinfection. In-school programming would only be on a partial-day basis. Students would continue learning remotely when not in school.

*At first, this physically distanced, in-person school would be provided only for specific student populations that would most benefit from in-person learning. Those would include all students in pre-kindergarten through grade 2; all sixth-graders and all ninth-graders; and high-needs students, including students with special education needs and students with intensive English language development (IELD) needs.*

*As public health requirements are met, physically distanced, in-person school would be available to all students on the same type of two-day rotating schedule outlined above: with students attending partial days either Mondays and Tuesdays or Thursdays and Fridays; and Wednesdays used for staff to plan and communicate with families and for enhanced cleaning of building. Remote learning would continue for times students aren't attending in-person school.*

*In the hybrid scenario, breakfast would be eaten in school in prepackaged containers and take-home lunches would be available for all. To ensure safety, families would be encouraged to provide transportation as much as possible and Walking School Buses would be used to the greatest extent possible. Our buses would use proper physical distancing and limit the time of trips. That means that space in some facilities could be made available to other grade levels to facilitate transportation.*

*For any families that choose to opt out of in-person learning, students would have the option to continue remote learning.*

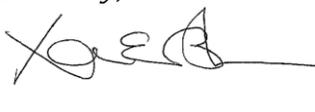
***Full remote learning:*** *In this scenario, all students would continue to be served through remote learning. Even if we begin the school year with another scenario, full remote learning may be enacted for short-term or long-term closures during the 2020-2021 school year, depending on the evolution of the pandemic. In this version of remote learning, we would build on our successes and learning from spring 2020. For example, some changes planned are coordinated scheduling of live instruction, providing other learning options for those not participating in live instruction, and implementing consistent procedures for communication and attendance.*

*You can learn many more details in this [summary](#) of potential scenarios.*

*Our Reopening Planning Team is a diverse one, made up of staff from our schools and representatives from our Academics, Operations and Multilingual & Multicultural Center teams. To develop these scenarios, this team is engaging with staff, students and families through surveys and focus groups. It also is talking to school leaders and nurses, researching ideas from education experts and reviewing the latest guidance from CDC and the MDOE.*

*We recognize that none of these scenarios is completely risk-free. However, the goal of each is to create a stronger learning experience for all students, no matter what we face next year. The decisions facing the district about reopening are complex and challenging, but they're also an opportunity for us all to reimagine school for the future, not just COVID-19. We will continue to keep you informed with updates over the summer as our planning progresses and we learn more about CDC and state guidance.*

*Sincerely,*



***Xavier Botana, Superintendent***