



TO: Dr. Joel D. Boyd, Superintendent

FROM: Robin Desmond, Chief Academic Officer

DATE: July 28, 2020

RE: Preliminary District Plan Summary due July 31, 2020

The Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) has required all school districts in Massachusetts to complete a two-step process for reporting on fall reopening plans. The first step is for school districts to complete and submit a preliminary reopening plan summary by July 31, 2020. This submission will allow the DESE to collect reopening summary information from districts. The second step is for school districts to finalize and submit their comprehensive reopening plans to the DESE by August 10, 2020.

Attached please find the guidance released by the DESE regarding the *Two-Step Process for District Fall Reopening Plans* and the step-one form completed by Lowell Public Schools (LPS). The attached LPS preliminary reopening plan represents a summary of the work that has been completed by the Return to School Taskforce. I would like to thank all the participants of the Return to School Taskforce for their efforts.



Two-Step Process for District Fall Reopening Plans

July 15, 2020

On June 25, 2020, the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) released [initial guidance](#) for school reopening that prioritizes getting students and staff safely back to school in person, following a comprehensive set of health and safety requirements. Through this guidance, DESE required schools to create a plan that includes three models: 1) in-person learning with new safety requirements; 2) a hybrid of in-person and remote learning; and 3) remote learning.

The reopening approach is built on a thorough review of current medical and scientific literature and was developed after extensive consultation with medical professionals from Massachusetts General Hospital, the Massachusetts COVID-19 Command Center's Medical Advisory Board, and others. Based on the current public health data and COVID-19 trends in Massachusetts, the medical community supports the return of Massachusetts students to in-person learning, with appropriate health and safety guidelines in place.

In this document, we provide an overview of the two-step process for district reopening plan submissions and the online form for preliminary plan summaries due July 31.

[Overview of Two-Step Process for District Reopening Plan Submissions](#)

Districts will submit their reopening plans to DESE through a two-step process:

- **Step 1: By July 31**, districts must complete and submit a *preliminary reopening plan summary* to DESE. Districts will fill out an [online form](#) that consists of two parts, which are outlined below and detailed later in this document. This form will allow DESE to collect key summary information about districts' reopening models and other planning considerations.
- **Step 2: By August 10**, districts must finalize their *comprehensive plan documents*, submit them to DESE, and release them publicly to their communities. This additional time will provide districts with an opportunity to incorporate any desired changes based on additional guidance DESE may release later in July, such as guidance on transportation and athletics. We strongly recommend that you work with your school committee (or equivalent board) on policy questions relevant to the final plan before submission.

Step 1: Preliminary Reopening Plan Summary due by July 31

This section provides an overview of the plan summary that districts will complete through the online form due by July 31. Please click [here](#) to access the form online.

The online form consists of the following sections:

- **Part I** asks for the district's contact information, key findings from the district's feasibility study on in-person learning, and the district's preliminary thinking about which of the three reopening models it may use to open the school year this fall.
- **Part II** asks the district to provide a brief description of each of the three reopening models districts have been asked to develop: 1) in-person learning with new safety requirements, 2) hybrid learning, and 3) remote learning. Each model must include support for High Needs students as defined [here](#).

Step 2: Expectations for Final District Reopening Plans due by August 10

As districts prepare for step two of this process – finalizing their comprehensive reopening plans – please note that plans should be written in a parent-friendly format, translated into the primary languages of students’ homes, and posted on the district website. All plans must be posted by August 10. Each district should include the following information in its final comprehensive reopening plan.

- A. **Executive summary**
- B. **Letter from the superintendent** to the community, including the district’s selection for the reopening model it will use to begin the school year.
- C. **In-person learning model:**
 - For this learning model, students receive in-person instruction full time in school environments that have been appropriately modified to address health and safety requirements issued by DESE.
 - In this model, districts may still have a subset of students whose families have decided to continue in a remote learning model while the rest of the school returns in-person full time.
 - In the description of this model, districts should include information about how student learning, scheduling, protocols, and/or facilities use may look different than in traditional in-person learning with no restrictions.
- D. **Hybrid learning model:**
 - In a hybrid model, students alternate between in-person learning with safety requirements and remote learning.
 - Districts should include information about how student learning will change across the two learning environments (in-person and remote) and provide sample schedules showing how students will rotate between in-person and remote learning models, including whether this varies among student groups and/or grade levels.
 - In a hybrid model, some High Needs students may still participate in full-time in-person instruction to ensure effective accommodations, and some families may still decide to keep their children learning remotely full time.
- E. **Remote learning model:**
 - In this learning model, remote learning is the default mode of instruction for all students, though some High Needs students may still be served in-person full time or through a hybrid model. Structured Learning Time requirements apply to remote learning.
 - Remote learning must include the following requirements per DESE regulations: (1) procedures for all students to participate in remote learning, including a system for tracking attendance and participation; (2) alignment of remote academic work to state standards; (3) a policy for issuing grades for students’ remote academic work; and (4) a method for teachers and administrators to regularly communicate with students’ parents and guardians, including providing interpretation and translation services to limited English proficient parents and guardians.
 - Districts should also include information about the technology platforms, staffing model, curriculum, and instructional materials they will employ.
- F. **Out-of-school time plan:** In this section, please include any information about additional supports, instruction, or services the district will provide to students: (a) before and after school, (b) through 21st Century Learning, if applicable, and (c) on the weekends.
- G. **Student supports and professional learning:** Please include the following information in this section: (a) safety, wellness, and social emotional supports, (b) planning and instruction, (c) assessment, and (d) intervention. (e) A school calendar with start date and PD days prior to opening is recommended.

- H. **Other:** Information in this section should be determined by the context of the district.
- I. **Certification of health and safety requirements:** Districts will need to certify that they meet the final health and safety requirements issued by DESE. A preliminary list of these requirements appears in DESE’s initial fall reopening guidance; DESE will release a final list later this month.

Overview of Online Form for Preliminary District Plan Summary due July 31

Please click [here](#) to access the online form to submit your preliminary district plan summary. **The overview below is provided for informational purposes only and should not be used to submit a plan summary.**

Part I: Contact Information, Feasibility Study Results, and Preliminary Reopening Model

District Name(s) ¹	
Superintendent Name:	
Superintendent Phone:	
Superintendent Email:	
Contact Completing Form:	
Contact Phone:	
Contact Email:	
COVID-19 Response Leader Name, Role, Title: <i>If different than contact completing form</i>	
Response Leader Phone:	
Response Leader Email:	

- 1. What were the key findings from your in-person learning **feasibility study**, and what does this imply for the student learning model you may use this fall? Suggested word limit: 300.

- 2. Which **reopening model** within your plan are you leaning towards for the start of the school year? Please select the predominant model for elementary, middle, and high school. (For example, in a plan where the majority of students are coming back in-person full time, a subset of students may continue to learn remotely if needed.) Districts can use the text box below this chart to provide further explanation of their selections, if needed.

Reopening Learning Models

Grade Span	Reopening Learning Models		
	In-person	Hybrid	Remote
Elementary			
Middle School			
High School			

¹ For collaborative and superintendency union leaders submitting for more than one district, please list all districts.

If you would like to provide an additional explanation of the initial reopening model in question 2 above, or if there are additional factors or challenges that you would like us to know, please write those here:

Part II: Summary of Three Reopening Learning Models

1. **In-person:** Please provide a summary of your plan for how students would return to full-time in-person learning. Please reference the “Step 2” section of this document (page 2) and provide an overview of what you believe to be the most critical information about how this model would work in your district. Suggested word limit: 400.

- Will any of your students be learning fully remotely? Yes/No
- Anticipated percent of students learning remotely ____%

2. **Hybrid:** Please provide a summary of your plan for how students would return to school through a hybrid learning model. Please reference the “Step 2” section of this document (page 2) and provide an overview of what you believe to be the most critical information about how this model would work in your district. Suggested word limit: 400.

3. **Remote:** Please provide a summary of your plan for remote learning as the default model of instruction for all students. Please reference the “Step 2” section of this document (page 2) and provide an overview of what you believe to be the most critical information about how this model would work in your district. Suggested word limit: 400.

4. **High needs students:** Please provide a summary of how students with disabilities, English learners (ELs), former EL students, and Economically Disadvantaged students will be supported within each of the three reopening models. Suggested word limit: 400.

Assistance and Questions about Plan Submissions

Should you have any questions about the plan submission process or the online form, please contact reopeningk12@mass.gov. If you need technical assistance with the online form (e.g., issues with technology or functionality), please contact research@doe.mass.edu.

Lowell Public Schools Preliminary Reopening Plan Summary

Part I:

What were the key findings from your in-person learning feasibility study, and what does this imply for the student learning model you may use this fall?

Lowell Public Schools (LPS) distributed a Return to School survey to parents/guardians of LPS students beginning June 26, 2020. The survey window was opened Friday June 26, 2020 through Wednesday July 8, 2020 and was distributed as a link posted to the LPS website, phone calls, email and social media and available in six languages. The survey consisted of 10 questions including general student information, Likert scale questions and the ability to write comments.

A total of 2,442 parents responded to the survey, with 2,233 responding to the survey in English, 114 responding to the survey in Spanish, 54 responding to the survey in Portuguese, 17 responding in Swahili, 14 responding to the survey in Khmer, and 5 responding in Arabic and Vietnamese.

The following results can be extrapolated to the rest of the system as a representative sample was achieved with a 95% confidence level and with a 5% plus or minus margin of error. Over 75% of participants are mostly concerned about their child's health and safety upon returning to school and the effects of physical distancing/isolation on them, and 35% indicated that they would not need childcare if remote learning were to continue this fall while roughly 20% indicated that they would be working outside the home and need childcare. Likewise, over 70% of respondents indicated that their children want to return to school. Another concern that was noted in the survey results were parents that work outside the home are not sure how they can accommodate both their child's needs (i.e. help with remote learning) and their responsibilities if they are working from home or their childcare needs if they are working outside the home. LPS also recognizes that school building capacity is at an average of 68% when implementing 6ft social distancing requirements. Based on this data, LPS believes a combination of full in-person learning for grades Pre-K-12 along with a full-time remote option for grades Pre-K-12 is what will work best for the community.

Reopening model selected for fall: Pre-K-12 in-person and Pre-K-12 remote

Part II:

In-person: Please provide a summary of your plan for how students would return to full-time in-person learning. Please reference the "Step 2" section of this document (page 2) and provide an overview of what you believe to be the most critical information about how this model would work in your district.

The LPS full in-person plan was developed by the In-person taskforce, and the plan calls for the most stringent health and safety standards for our school spaces while shifting our instructional practices to use more technology to help our students meet and exceed standards. Instructionally, we will use in-person time to assess students to create instructional plans that provide grade-level

instruction while concurrently providing intervention based on student need. LPS district-wide curriculum maps align with the Massachusetts Frameworks. The District has also made significant investments in devices, digital platforms, and individual materials so that students will not have to share materials while in school. The use of technology will reduce the use of shared papers and materials making it easier for staff to keep spaces clean and sanitized. LPS administrators have mapped out learning spaces to calculate six feet of distance between student desks with all students facing the same direction. Students will still be able to interact and work together, but will use technology to do so safely. Our investment in technology will also help us pivot to a remote learning scenario later in the year if the medical data calls for it.

Our in-person plan calls for extensive safety procedures. We have ordered signage and floor markers to remind students about physical distancing. We have foggers for every building, and LPS is developing schedules to insure the sanitation of rooms on a regular basis. Also included in the plan are schedule recommendations for cleaning frequently touched items, such as handrails, knobs, bathroom fixtures, etc. LPS staff have identified spaces that will need other equipment, such as air purifiers, to be used safely. Students will eat all meals in their classrooms, and staff will employ class or cohort scheduling to mitigate cross-contamination. Allied arts will be held in the classroom for younger students and we will purposefully schedule EL and special education students in cohorts. Additionally, schedules will mandate regular, outdoor face mask breaks and will attend to room temperature as well.

Significant time has been spent to develop health protocols to answer the many questions families and staff have posed about what will happen when anyone in the school is exposed to or tests positive for COVID or when quarantining will need to take place.

Our Full In-Person plan recognizes that we have many students and staff who are high-risk and accommodate them with a parent opt out to a full remote program.

Hybrid: Please provide a summary of your plan for how students would return to school through a hybrid learning model. Please reference the “Step 2” section of this document (page 2) and provide an overview of what you believe to be the most critical information about how this model would work in your district.

LPS has a hybrid learning taskforce that has been investigating models and structures. The task force researched hybrid learning models from multiple sources. After much research and discussion, the LPS hybrid plan calls for four different cohorts of students. Cohort A would attend in-person on Mondays and Tuesdays, with Cohort B attending on Thursdays and Fridays, for instruction and the launch of application assignments and independent learning projects for three days at home. Wednesdays would be dedicated to deep cleaning in the school, extra help/intervention sessions, and grade-level or content-area teacher planning. At home days will also incorporate synchronous lessons insure attendance and attention to social emotional learning. Support teachers, allied arts and paraprofessionals will be available to students for support at home. Cohort C is for full in-person instruction, prioritizing high needs students, students without internet access, and children of essential workers. Cohort D is for students whose parents have opted in to the full remote program. The curriculum maps, aligned to the

Massachusetts Frameworks, provide the structure for instruction, but we anticipate pedagogical changes for both health and safety and to adapt to the remote component. With the purchase of new technology, we will become a 1:1 device district. Therefore, assignments and instruction can be disseminated through electronic platforms, such as Google Classroom and SeeSaw. This will limit the contact of distributing papers and materials, allow for social distanced group work, connect students in both hybrid cohorts, and allow for flipped classroom structures to preserve precious in-person class time.

The hybrid plan will follow all of the health and safety components of the full, in-person plan (please refer to that section for more details), but will be more manageable due to reduced numbers of students in each school space. There are additional needs, such as insuring internet connectivity for students and providing students and families with clear communication about expectations, assignments, schedules, participation, and grading. The hybrid plans also calls for extensive professional development and training for our students, our teachers, and our families so that that we can employ best practices. PD sessions include using and troubleshooting the devices and software, orientation to the learning management system, expectations for time on learning, participation, and production of work/assessments.

Remote: Please provide a summary of your plan for remote learning as the default model of instruction for all students. Please reference the “Step 2” section of this document (page 2) and provide an overview of what you believe to be the most critical information about how this model would work in your district.

The LPS Remote learning taskforce developed a plan designed to restrict access to school buildings for the majority of staff and students until it is deemed safe to return to school. The plan is designed to establish consistent online platforms creating bridges between the educators and the families with regard to instruction, assignments, and communication to make learning and school completely virtual and able to be done in a remote setting through synchronous and asynchronous work. Within those plans, however, there are exceptions designed to allow for in-person instruction for small groups or individual students who require that type of instruction given that proper safety and health guidelines could be followed to protect the safety, health, and well-being of both staff and students.

The Remote Learning plan is designed with several different possible scenarios in mind. The first scenario would work in the event that all schools (or even a single school) needed to be closed due to COVID concerns or transmission. The second scenario within the Remote Learning model would act as a component of the Hybrid model and be implemented in conjunction with the in-person instructional components of that model. The last scenario accounted for within the planning was for those families who selected Remote Learning as an option regardless of the plan adopted by the district for re-opening schools in the fall.

The Remote Learning model team made recommendations about adopting flexible curriculum maps that allow teachers and schools to adjust them to the specific needs and challenges presented by a Remote Learning model and to employ a flipped classroom pedagogy to insure that synchronous sessions are devoted to higher level application of concepts, rather than new instruction. In addition, the team recommended that all schools utilize consistent communication

platforms for families, such as REMIND, to ensure that parents were not inundated with a wide variety of platforms for their children. This would be particularly important for families with students in different grade-levels and possibly at different schools. The team recommended consistent instructional platforms, such as SeeSaw and Google Classroom, in conjunction with consistent instructional tools, such as ScreenCastify, to streamline the accessibility for families. Lastly, the team strongly recommended model schedule frames for every school with an elementary and middle school model that gives a consistent structure for both staff and families during the period of Remote Learning.

The final component of the remote learning plan was focused on providing training for the staff and for the families prior to the implementation of the full Remote Learning model. This would involve both professional development days for staff be formally scheduled into the school calendar, but also creating training sessions for parents with regard to any and all of the components within the LPS Remote Learning plan.

High needs students: Please provide a summary of how students with disabilities, English learners (ELs), former EL students, and Economically Disadvantaged students will be supported within each of the three reopening models.

LPS recognizes the unique learning needs of the above listed student populations, and LPS is committed to providing as much in-person instruction as is feasible within the health and safety parameters in effect at each particular time. In the case where LPS cannot return all students for in-person learning, and must implement either a predominantly hybrid or remote model, LPS may identify groups of students to attend school in-person full-time when all health and safety requirements may be effectively followed. Some students have a particularly high need for in-person instruction in order to progress adequately in their learning. If in-person instruction cannot be provided and students must receive instruction remotely in full, or in part, through a hybrid model, unique learning needs of all students will be met through differentiated lessons and interventions. Students with individual education plans will receive special education instruction and related services necessary to provide FAPE through an Instruction and Services model of delivery.