



SHREWSBURY PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Department of School Nursing

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To: School Committee

Re: Report on Health and Safety Considerations for the Reopening of Schools

As you are well aware, planning for what school will look like in the fall is a complicated process. District leaders must collaborate to plan for all aspects of the school experience, including but not limited to curriculum, specialized support and services, technology needs, the use and capacity of learning spaces, transportation services, food services, athletics, staffing needs, and budget challenges. All of this planning must take place while prioritizing the health and safety needs of students, staff and families in a rapidly changing environment.

The 6/25/20 [Initial Fall Reopening Guidance](#) from the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) prioritizes “getting our students back to school in person - safely...” and is based on the work of “the Return-to-School Working Group, infectious disease physicians, pediatricians, and other public health experts; a thorough review of the medical literature; and evaluating what works best for our students...”. In addition to the Initial Guidance, DESE released “Protocols for responding to COVID-19 scenarios in school, on the bus or in community settings” on 7/17/2020 (enclosed). The Protocols document is particularly helpful in guiding school health practice around the care and disposition of students who are ill at school, on the bus, or home. Both the DESE Initial Guidance and the Protocols focus on a combination of health and safety requirements which include physical distancing of a minimum of 3 feet, mask wearing, hand washing, self-monitoring of symptoms and/or exposure to COVID-19 and staying home if sick, what to do when an individual displays COVID-19 symptoms at school or home, steps to follow when a positive case is reported, and contact tracing in conjunction with local boards of health. The Initial Guidance document’s intent to provide students with in-person school experiences is clearly an important part of the reopening equation. Since its release, parts of the document have prompted much discussion and have raised concerns for various stakeholders; these concerns must also be factored into our thinking.

The health, safety, and well-being of our students, staff and families is at the center of all planning discussions. The input of families and staff are an integral part of the process. As reported to the Committee last week, Dr. Sawyer surveyed families regarding their preferences on several aspects of reopening. Results of this and upcoming opportunities for additional family input provide us with much needed information. A staff survey was recently created and released by the Human Resources and Staff Well-Being subcommittee of the Reopening Task Force. This repository for staff concerns and ideas regarding reopening will be open for questions and comments through mid-August and will help to inform decision making.

From a health and safety perspective, we are fortunate to have many sources of information to look to when planning and determining best practices. As we move forward with planning for reopening and consider both the DESE guidance and staff and family feedback, district leaders also continually review information provided by the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), the World Health Organization (WHO), the American Academy of Pediatrics, as well as a growing body of research on the subject of COVID-19 considerations for return to school. After reviewing all of the information available to us, the one thing that is clear is that there is no definitive conclusion, “right answer”, or guarantee of a safe plan for opening. Instead, our district planning must take into consideration the most recent medical science that is available to us, and strive to make the best decision that we can to mitigate risk for our school community.

We look forward to presenting information regarding the current medical science and advisories at your meeting on July 22.

Respectfully,

Noelle Freeman, Director of School Nursing

Timothy Gibson, MD, SPS School Physician and UMassMemorial Hospitalist