

Dear Parents and Community Members,

The Brookline Educators Union has always been in favor of returning to in-person education as soon as it was feasible to do so. We were happy to cooperate with the Public Schools of Brookline to transition from fully remote to hybrid this Fall, and are proud that we have kept our students safe.

As we look forward to quickly returning all our students to our classrooms full time, and to the public hearing on February 23, we continue to advocate for our families, students and staff, asking that the district proceed with this plan in a way that is safe, clearly articulated, and appropriately supported by resources. We listened carefully to Dr. Marini present his ideas for returning more students. While we are still assessing the PSB document data on the safety of reduced distancing, we believe there are logistical questions that need answers in order to successfully move forward. A few of these initial questions include:

- How many families want to return to school full time at reduced distances? Will families be comfortable with 5 feet, 4 feet, 3 feet? How will families know the distance at which students in their specific classrooms will be distanced? We encourage the district to calculate and publish the spacing that will be required in each classroom to accommodate a full class of students, and to survey parents to find out their comfort with these published distances.
- How many families would want to switch to remote learning if distancing were reduced? Will these families have an opportunity to move their children from in person classrooms to the RLA? Families were told to make a final decision about their instructional model before they knew that we would return to school full-time at reduced distancing.
- When distancing is reduced, more students and staff may need to quarantine because they are much more likely to be close contacts. Will more substitute teachers be hired and trained to cover teachers and staff who may be required to quarantine?
- Are paraprofessional jobs fully-staffed at this point? If not, when will they be? A fully-populated school depends on the expertise and attention of paraprofessionals.
- Children are eating lunch, snack, and sometimes breakfast daily in class. These are all unmasked times. How will these times be handled, given reduced distances, to protect students and staff?
- How will the district monitor increasing risks? Will there be testing protocols and daily attestations for students and staff? What metrics will be used to monitor and decide whether the reduced distancing conditions are indeed safe? What would trigger the shutdown of a class or the school in terms of positive cases? Have the UK variant and other variants been planned for?
- Last fall, Panel 4 suggested that 5 ACH was the goal for bringing a full class in but 4 ACH was provisionally ok while we were hybrid. What are the plans for bringing ventilation up to 5 ACH?
- What support will the district offer to students who are quarantined and/or awaiting negative tests once grade levels are fully in person and there is no live contact with teachers during the period of quarantine?
- How will 4th and 5th grade music conservatory classes be delivered safely in person, given both the nature of the classes, and the need to mix cohorts of students for this class? Additionally, specialists often move between classrooms and can be exposed to hundreds of students daily; how will the district address their increased risk of exposure?

Please hear me when I say that the BEU looks forward to working with the district to bring students back into our classrooms full time. This transition can only be successful if the district works with the educators to identify and address the challenges that will undoubtedly arise. Furthermore, it is our hope that there will be support for our school administrators as they work to rebuild school schedules and redefine space uses. While everyone is anxious, frustrated, and COVID-fatigued, we believe that with thoughtful planning and trouble-shooting during this phase, we can safely bring more students back to fully in person learning.

Sincerely,

The Educators of The Brookline Educators Union