

Peirce and APS Plan for Resilient Pandemic Recovery and Reconnection

September 1, 2021

We will begin momentarily!

Elizabeth C. Homan, PhD
Superintendent of Schools



Andrew Ahmadi, Principal
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Tonight's Forum



- We will go through major aspects of the plan, stopping for questions along the way. We welcome your commentary in the chat feature and will do our best to answer all of your questions.
- We will pause after every 5-6 slides and review questions. I will try to speak at a moderate speech rate as this is being interpreted in several languages.
- Mr. Ahmadi and Ms. Goodrich will provide additional details or examples of what our protocols *could* look like at Peirce School.
- If we don't get to your question, please feel free to email us: aahmadi@arlington.k12.ma.us, owilson@arlington.k12.ma.us or our school nurse, Susan Almquist salmquist@arlington.k12.ma.us and we will do our best to respond promptly.

Acknowledgements



Thank you to the:

1. 11 teachers,
2. 4 health professionals,
3. 22 family members,
4. 42 administrators, and
5. 2 community members

Who have contributed to the priority setting, drafting, and revision of this plan.

This Team Acknowledges that:

1. **Learning and teaching experiences were significantly impacted**, and impacted in different ways, for our students.
2. **Families were challenged with new and different responsibilities**, and were required to juggle many demands related to their children's social and academic learning with more limited resources.
3. **Arlington Public Schools teachers and staff were required to do their jobs in dramatically different ways.**

Priorities for a Resilient Recovery



1. **All students will have access to equitable, inclusive and safe learning environments** that uphold COVID-19 safety measures and protocols; support the mental, social and emotional health of students and staff; value diversity as an asset to learning and community; and promote social justice, healing and joy.
2. **Educators will collaborate, communicate, and partner with students and families** to foster (re)connection and ensure a sense of belonging and community for all students, families, and staff.
3. **The APS will build upon and refine a flexible system** to ensure all students are challenged and receive the academic, social, and emotional support necessary to thrive and succeed.

Supports for All Students



1. First Six Weeks Focus on building positive relationships with all students.
2. Use of tools and assessments to understand needs of students, such as:
 - a. Mental health screeners (grades 3-12)
 - b. Early literacy screeners and assessments (DIBELS, grades K-3, iReady 3-5)
 - c. Standards-based grade-level curriculum assessments (PreK-12)
3. Support plans as necessary to identify and provide necessary supports and timelines for implementation. Examples of supports listed at right, and [examples of the types of data](#) teachers may use to inform instruction are included here.

An example of the different types of support strategies teachers may use to meet student needs include, **but are not exclusive to**, the following:

Academic Supports in the Classroom:

- Graphic organizers
- Breaking down directions into smaller steps
- Scaffolding assignments
- Small group/one-on-one instruction
- Explicit modeling of assignments
- Picture/Visual cues
- Extended time for submitting assignments

Social and Emotional Supports:

- Provide a “cool down”/”Break”/”Calming Space
- Predictable routines and schedule
- Provide student with frequent breaks (loops)
- Use role playing to teach appropriate behavior
- Practice transition routines
- Problem solve with a trusted adult



Q&A: Priorities, Instruction, Communication

Health and Safety Protocols



- Masking
- Vaccinations
- Pooled Testing
- Distancing and Cohorting
- Ventilation and Air Purification
- Illness Protocol
- Quarantine
- Travel
- Sanitizing Spaces and Supplies
- Handwashing and Sanitization
- Meals and Nutrition
- Transportation

Masking Recommendation



The Arlington Public Schools will require indoor masking for all teachers and students PreK-12 to start the 2021-22 school year, regardless of vaccination status. This recommendation aligns with the [CDC](#) and neighboring communities and allows us to confidently provide a safe and equitable start to the school year.

Parameters to be considered when re-assessing masking requirements will include, ***but are not limited to:***

- Student and staff vaccination rates of at least 90% for those students and staff who are able to be vaccinated.
- Low sustained prevalence of COVID-19 in Arlington, the state of Massachusetts, and our schools, as defined by the Massachusetts Department of Public Health and Town of Arlington Department of Health and Human Services.
- Participation of at least 90% of students and staff across all schools in COVID-19 pooled testing, regardless of vaccination status.

Vaccinations



The APS will require the vaccination of staff. We are currently developing the parameters for and working out the details of the requirement in full collaboration with the AEA and AAA. That said, all employees will be vaccinated or have a medical/religious exemption.

APS and the Department of Health and Human Services will coordinate COVID-19 vaccination clinics, starting with a **COVID-19 Vaccine Clinic at Thompson Elementary School on Thursday, September 9th from 3pm-7pm.**

We intend to continue vaccine clinics throughout the year, including when vaccines become available to children under 12.

Routine COVID-19 Pooled Testing



We must acquire parental consent for participation in COVID-19 pooled testing for the new school year. We are not able to make pooled testing mandatory for students because it is a medical test that requires informed consent.

We learned that the DESE has contracted with a new vendor (CIC) for COVID-19 pooled testing and will no longer allow us to work with the same vendor as we had previously. This new information means:

- We will communicate with families who filled out the form early (thank you!) to let them know how to ensure their consent is valid. We are working on a plan that will make this as streamlined as possible.



Q&A: Masking, Vaccinations, and Testing

Distancing and Cohorting



We will *not* require that students remain in desks a specified distance apart and facing forward.

Teachers may return to flexible seating arrangements and the use of rugs and collaborative materials in their classrooms.

Some cohorting measures will be in place **at the PreK-6 level:**

- a. Students will have assigned seating and collaboration in “table groups” for much of the day. This is common practice in our schools, before and during the pandemic. They will follow a similar seating arrangement in specials and during lunch. Groups will change periodically at the teachers’ discretion.
- b. Classes/LCs will be separated by a minimum of 6’ during indoor lunches.
- c. Outdoor lunches will be an option as often as possible. Last year we ate outside for a significant portion of the year.

Students are allowed to play, unmasked, with students from other classes outdoors during recess.

Ventilation and Air Purification



Last school year's ventilation and purification protocols will remain in place:

- 4-6 air exchanges are recommended per hour.
- Most student classrooms have univents on exterior walls or vents that pull outdoor air directly into the classroom at 4-6 air exchange rates / hour.
- These univents are equipped with MERV-13 filters that will be changed in August, December, and April.

Additional layers of ventilation and purification:

- Austin Air purifiers in student-occupied spaces.
- Ability to assess any space when educators have concerns.
- Windows will be open as often as possible, weather and temperature permitting.



Illness Protocol

Students who are ill or show symptoms of COVID-19 should stay home, and parents should call the school to report the student's absence. Symptoms of COVID-19 include the following:

- **Fever (100.0° Fahrenheit or higher), chills, or shaking chills**
- **Difficulty breathing or shortness of breath**
- **New loss of taste or smell**
- **Muscle aches or body aches**
- Cough (not due to other known cause, such as chronic cough)
- Sore throat, when in combination with other symptoms
- Nausea, vomiting, or diarrhea when in combination with other symptoms
- Headache when in combination with other symptoms
- Fatigue, when in combination with other symptoms
- Nasal congestion or runny nose (not due to other known causes, such as allergies) when in combination with other symptoms.

Symptoms clarification: the top 4 symptoms in BOLD are stand-alone symptoms; others below are only considered symptoms of COVID-19 when in combination with other symptoms on the list.



Q&A: Distancing, Ventilation, Illness

Responding to COVID-19 Scenarios



When a positive case is identified, we will:

- Identify Close Contacts:
 - Close contacts are defined as individuals who have been within 6 feet of a COVID-19 positive individual while indoors, for at least 15 minutes during a 24-hour period.
 - **In classroom settings where individuals are fully masked, close contacts are any individuals who have been within 3 feet of a COVID-19 positive individual for 15 minutes or more during a 24-hour period. This is a differentiation in schools vs. other settings. Acknowledge that each case has different sets of variables - all will be investigated thoroughly.**
 - We work in collaboration with teachers, the APS Nursing Department, and the Department of Health and Human Services to identify and notify close contacts.
- Inform Close Contacts: If your child is identified as a close contact of a COVID-19 positive individual, a school or health department official will contact you as soon as possible with thorough instructions;
- Update the District COVID-19 Dashboard (under construction);
- Conduct test-and-stay with students who are close contacts; and
- After each case, follow up routinely and monitor pooled testing data and procedures at each school to ensure no school-based spread.

Test-and-Stay



Close contacts may remain in school and do not have to quarantine, as long as they:

- Are asymptomatic
- Wear masks in school at all times, other than when eating or drinking. When these individuals cannot be masked (i.e., when eating or drinking), we will distance students 3' or more from others.
- Take a rapid antigen test (e.g., BinaxNOW) at the start of each school day and receive a negative result.
- Individuals should quarantine on weekends and when not in school-based activities, and if they remain asymptomatic, upon return to school be tested immediately.
- If the individual remains negative, they can stay in school.
- Conduct active monitoring for symptoms through day 14, and self-isolate at home if symptoms develop.

Quarantine: Asymptomatic and Negative



Students who choose not to do “test and stay” OR who are identified as close contacts from exposure outside of school may return after 7 days, returning on day 8, provided that they:

- Remain asymptomatic
- Receive a COVID test (PCR or rapid antigen) on day 5 or later and receive a negative result.
- Conduct active monitoring for symptoms through day 14, and self-isolate if symptoms develop.

Note: If an individual has symptoms at the time they are designated as a close contact or within the 14 days following initial exposure, they follow the protocol for symptomatic individuals. If an individual tests positive at any time, they follow the protocol for individuals who test positive for COVID-19.

We will provide asynchronous work for students who quarantine, and we urge families to take precautions and participate in test-and-stay so that students miss as little school as possible.

Participation in Test-and-Stay requires consent for COVID-19 routine pooled testing!

Quarantine and Isolation: Symptomatic and Positive



POSITIVE	SYMPTOMATIC
<p>If an individual tests positive at any time, they follow the protocol for individuals who test positive for COVID-19 and may return to school:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• After 10 days AND• Without fever for 24 hours (and without taking fever-reducing medications) AND• Experienced improvement in other symptoms. <p>Individuals who do not meet these criteria after 10 days may receive clearance from Department of Health and Human Services or APS Nursing staff.</p>	<p>Not a close contact: May return to school once they:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Have received a negative PCR test result for COVID-19.• If a medical professional makes an alternative diagnosis for the COVID-19-like symptoms, the individual may use this recommendation (e.g., for influenza or strep pharyngitis) in lieu of a PCR test.• Have improvement in symptoms• Have been without fever for at least 24 hours without the use of fever-reducing medications. <p>If symptomatic individual chooses not to be tested, must remain out of school for 10 days and can return on Day 11, with symptom resolution and without fever-reducing medication for 24 hours.</p> <p>Close contact: May return to school once they:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Have a resolution of symptoms.• Received a negative PCR COVID-19 test. <p>Student in this scenario must participate in test and stay once they return to school, otherwise will be subject to close contact quarantine protocols.</p>

Travel Recommendations



Our goal is for students to safely attend school as often as possible. **Mitigation measures listed here are intended as suggestions, and should not preclude students from attending school.**

We recommend the following actions for families who are traveling out of state or out of the country:

- Vaccinate all eligible members of your household prior to travel.
- Wear masks during and after travel.
- Test for COVID-19 before returning to school.
- Test for COVID-19 again on day 5 following travel.
- Actively monitor for symptoms of COVID-19 following travel.
- Use mitigation strategies in public areas while traveling, such as masking, regardless of the vaccination status.

If you need information about COVID-19 testing, [please visit the Department of Health and Human Services Website.](#)

We will not be recommending or requiring quarantine for students following travel unless it is required by a state or national travel order.

Q&A: Travel, Test-&-Stay, Quarantine, Response



Meals and Nutrition



At Peirce Elementary:

- Students will eat with their cohort/class/Learning Community.
- Outdoor eating will be implemented as often as possible.
- Students will be assigned seats in the cafeteria.
- Students will sit with other students from their classes when eating indoors.
- 6' of distance will be maintained between different classes/Learning Communities when eating indoors.

Transportation



Transportation will be available to students according to our usual district policies and procedures, with the following health and safety measures in place:

- All students and drivers must wear masks while on the bus.
- Windows will be open on all days when the weather conditions allow.
- Students will receive an assigned seat at the start of the year in order to facilitate contact tracing.
- High-touch areas on busses will be sanitized in between runs of separate groups of students. All busses will be sanitized at the end of each route (2x/day).

Q&A: Sanitization, Meals, Transportation



Or any other questions you have.