

August 13, 2021

Dear Boston Public Schools Families:

We are excited to launch the new school year and looking forward to seeing your students as they return to school in a few short weeks. The team has been hard at work preparing for the fall to ensure your students feel welcomed back to our school buildings whether they learned in-person, in a hybrid model, or fully remotely last year. Our community is focused on making sure all students and staff are ready for a great school year.

I am writing to provide some updates as we continue our planning. As a reminder, the first day of school for students in **grades 1-12** is **Thursday, September 9**. The first day of school for students in **pre-K and Kindergarten** is **Monday, September 13**. The full calendar for the 2021-22 school year is available at [bostonpublicschools.org/calendar](https://www.bostonpublicschools.org/calendar).

Health and Safety

All BPS students and staff, regardless of vaccination status, will be required to wear masks while inside school buildings and during yellow bus transportation when they return to school in September. BPS does not plan to mandate physical distancing when we return to school this fall, though we will encourage 3 feet of physical distancing whenever possible.

BPS will continue to monitor for COVID-19 symptoms and all staff and students are encouraged to stay home when they are not feeling well. Students and staff are asked to complete the [home health checklist](#) every day before leaving their home. Contact tracing will continue in collaboration with our colleagues at the Boston Public Health Commission (BPHC). We are also working with the BPHC to review public health guidance and adapt our practices and procedures for student grouping and assigned seating, medical waiting areas, and free COVID-19 testing for students and staff.

BPS staff will also adhere to the recently announced vaccine verification or regular testing policy for City of Boston employees, a critical step to ensure the health and safety of our school communities. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends that everyone age 12+ receive a COVID-19 vaccine. Vaccines are one of the most important tools we have to protect ourselves and each other from COVID-19, however vaccination rates in certain city neighborhoods and among youth ages 12-15 remain below the City of Boston average. BPS is working with BPHC to host Back to School COVID-19 Vaccine Clinics at locations throughout the city, including many BPS schools. No appointment is necessary, walk-in appointments are welcomed, and the events will feature food, raffles, and other prizes. For more information, please visit boston.gov/covid19-vaccine.

Academic Vision: A Plan to Recover and Reimagine Learning



The federal and state government, along with city officials including our current and past Mayor and City Councilors, have made significant investments in the BPS. We plan to use these resources to invest in our students and schools. Upon return to school, students and families can expect:

- Increased access to social workers and family liaisons
- High-quality compensatory services for students with disabilities
- Increased access to translation service and multilingual digital libraries
- More access to books, materials and resources
- Expanded Pre-K seats across the city
- Opportunities to engage with digital literacy platforms to support and enhance literacy and language instruction
- Extended learning time in many schools

In addition, schools were allocated funds for academic, social-emotional, and operational supports tailored to the unique needs of their communities. Principals will be collaborating with their school communities to determine how best to invest these funds through October 1, 2021.

We will focus on equitable literacy across the Pre-K-12 system. This multi-year initiative will touch every educator, irrespective of content, school and central office leader. We must deliver on a promise of dramatically improved literacy outcomes and opportunities for our students and ensure each and every student becomes a strong and proficient reader and writer. We will focus our time and attention on ensuring student access to complex and engaging texts, especially ensuring that we center BIPOC authors. In addition, we must afford our students opportunities and instruction on how to discuss and write from complex text. BPS students are brilliant. We will provide our students with the opportunities to liberate their brilliance by affording them engaging, rigorous and rich literacy experiences across our Pre-K-12 system. To support this focus, we will also increase access to Multilingual Digital Libraries, school-based libraries as well as Boston Public Library digital library cards.

Facilities and Air Quality

In addition to last year's repair of more than 12,000 windows to support airflow and increase ventilation, BPS is in the process of installing indoor air quality sensors in all school buildings, beginning with classrooms and learning spaces. We are also working to replace the filters in all 5,000 air purifiers that were deployed to schools last year. Air purifier filters will be replaced every six months. For our schools with HVAC systems, we are replacing MERV-13 filters in accordance with regular building system maintenance. BPS custodians are also hard at work cleaning our facilities and preparing our school buildings for students and staff to return next month. Sanitation stations will remain in hallways and classrooms, and schools will be fully stocked with personal protective equipment and a three month supply of cleaning materials.

Transportation

BPS is in the process of routing bus-eligible students and will send yellow bus assignments to students and families by postal mail and email by August 27. Yellow buses will be disinfected daily and students and staff will be required to wear masks onboard the bus. In addition, M7 MBTA passes will be sent to schools later this month and will be distributed to eligible students in grades 7-12 on the first day of school.

Families can utilize our [Support Portal](#) to request any changes to their student's transportation assignment. Our customer service representatives are also available to assist families and answer any questions on our Transportation Hotline at 617-635-9520 or by email at schoolbus@bostonpublicschools.org.

Building Access and After-School Programs

Building access will still be limited as we enter the school year while we continue to monitor the public health environment. BPS will permit some partners who are working directly with students to access school buildings for before- and after-school programs, on a school-by-school basis. We will provide additional details in our next update for families. We are also limiting parent access to schools this fall to reduce the number of individuals inside our buildings. If you need to enter your child's school building, you must coordinate with your school leader and/or school teacher.

Thank you for your continued collaboration. We're looking forward to having all of our students back in our schools, ready for another year of learning. I hope you all enjoy the last few weeks of summer. We can't wait to see you in September!

In unity,



Dr. Brenda Cassellius
Superintendent