

July 23, 2021

Dear Boston Public Schools Community:

I hope you are all enjoying a happy and healthy summer. I am writing to provide a few updates on the progress we have made on some district initiatives and to provide additional information as we continue planning for a successful start to the 2021-22 school year.

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).

Fall Health and Safety Protocols

BPS continues to follow the science and guidance from public health officials. As previously mentioned, BPS will be providing in-person learning for all students for the new school year beginning in September.

According to the [“CDC Guidance for COVID-19 Prevention in K-12 Schools”](#) published this month, “Students benefit from in-person learning, and safely returning to in-person instruction in the fall 2021 is a priority. Vaccination is currently the leading public health prevention strategy to end the COVID-19 pandemic.”

BPS expects that all students and staff will be required to wear masks while inside school buildings and during yellow bus transportation when they return to school in September. We know that our students age 11 and under cannot yet be vaccinated and for ages 12 to 15 only 18% in the city of Boston are vaccinated right now. For ages 16 to 24 only 52% are vaccinated. Vaccines are the best way to protect ourselves from COVID-19, and masking is also an important prevention tool we must use.

BPS does not plan to mandate physical distancing when we return to school this fall. The [CDC guidance](#) states that physical distancing is one health and safety strategy, but if it is not possible to fully reopen schools while maintaining physical distancing, students should still learn in person and school districts should use other prevention strategies, like indoor masking, frequent hand-washing, and good indoor ventilation.

We are monitoring updates from the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) and public health officials and awaiting additional guidance from the Mass. Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) on expectations for health and safety protocols. Our plans will be finalized once we receive fall reopening guidance from DESE and consult with our colleagues at the Boston Public Health Commission.

ESSER Funding

BPS recently released the [first draft of the plan](#) to distribute the \$400 million in Elementary and Secondary Schools Emergency Relief (ESSER) funding that the district is expected to receive

from the federal government over the next three years. The plan has been translated into nine languages and is available for public comment until Friday, July 30. Review the plan and submit your feedback by completing the [online form](#) at bostonpublicschools.org/FederalReliefFunds21.

We also invite all community members to join us at a [community comment session](#). Our next virtual meeting is [Thursday, July 29](#), from 6:00-7:30 p.m. Meeting information is also available at bostonpublicschools.org/FederalReliefFunds21.

Once the public comment period formally ends on July 30, I will review the feedback we've received over the past three months and provide a summary of major investments to the School Committee during their next meeting on August 4. We realize we won't be able to fund every request, but we are committed to continuing to evaluate our progress and make amendments as needed over the next three years.

Exam Schools Admissions Policy

Last week the Boston School Committee unanimously approved a [new admissions policy](#) for the district's three exam schools: Boston Latin Academy, Boston Latin School, and the John D. O'Bryant School of Mathematics and Science. I am so grateful for the dedicated work of every member of the Task Force, which included parents, school leaders, students, and community leaders. The Task Force met their charge, formulating a policy that, across our exam schools, increases equitable opportunity, maintains academic rigor and results in a student population reflective of the racial, socioeconomic, and geographic diversity of all BPS students. The new policy will begin to impact admissions for the 2022-23 school year. Information about the three exam schools, including a fact sheet about the new policy available in 10 languages, can be found at bostonpublicschools.org/exam. We will continue to provide information about the new policy to families and will post updates on the exam schools webpage.

The approval of the new admissions criteria is an important step forward in our pursuit of equitable policies and practices across our district. As we work to implement this new policy, we will also direct our focus to the important high school redesign work to ensure every BPS student has access to a high-quality education.

Thank you for your continued support and collaboration. I am looking forward to seeing our students, staff and families more frequently in the new school year.

All my best,



Dr. Brenda Cassellius
Superintendent