

NORTHAMPTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS

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September 11, 2020

Dear Northampton Public School Community:

The Northampton School Committee, Northampton Association of School Employees (NASE), and district administration have been working collaboratively to provide the best and safest learning environment for our students and staff during the COVID-19 health crisis. We have been engaged in a productive dialog since the first days of this crisis to promote learning while keeping our students and all school employees safe. We have reached agreement on the issues critical for school opening although there are still some points that we are continuing to work out, we do not want them to get in the way of a successful school opening.

We realize it is important for our staff and families to know what to expect when learning resumes next Wednesday, so we are writing now to summarize the following key provisions that have been agreed upon. This summary does not cover all aspects or all agreements that have been reached. Employees and the public will receive additional information in the days ahead. This communication is intended to provide some information that is critical for all to know before the opening of school. If you have questions about topics not covered in this communication you are encouraged to reach out to your building administrator and/or NASE representative.

Remote Status

The Northampton Public Schools (NPS) will implement its remote learning model until at least November 4th. More details of the remote learning model can be found in the *Northampton Public Schools 2020 School Reopening Plan* available online at <https://tinyurl.com/yys3bdtj>

Teachers and administrators have worked to develop student schedules that conform to the guidelines set forth in the reopening plan. **Details about individual student schedules will be shared between schools/teachers and families. At this time, we encourage open communication about individual class and student schedules.**

Wednesdays

In the remote and hybrid learning models, most students will receive a morning and afternoon check in with their teachers and/or ESPs on Wednesdays. At the high school, all classes will run for a shortened period during the morning. Educators will provide students with a schedule for directed study, independent study, technology assisted learning, or presentations by persons other than teachers to work on during the non-check in portions of Wednesdays. Special education services on Wednesdays will occur in the morning.

School Calendar

The first day of remote classes will be September 16th. Since the 16th is a Wednesday, it will follow the schedule described in the previous section. September 17th and 18th will be half-day teacher work days. Instruction on the 17th and the 18th will occur in the mornings only. All instruction on September 16th, 17th and 18th will be remote. Full-day remote classes, with in-person service for those students who are prioritized for in-person service, will begin on Monday, September 21st. The last scheduled day of classes remains June 17th. Other adjustments have been made to the school calendar to align with the later start date. The revised school calendar can be found online at:

<http://www.northamptonschools.org/district-calendar/>

Remote Instruction

Student assignments will be posted Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, and Friday on the remote learning platform. In most cases, this will be either Classroom Dojo or Google Classroom. During these days a combination of synchronous and asynchronous teaching will take place, with a minimum of 3.5 hours of a teacher's instructional time spent in synchronous learning. Teachers will be available for at least this amount of synchronous time, but this does not necessarily mean that every student will be online for this amount of time each day. Some of the teacher's 3.5 hours of synchronous time may be devoted to small group instruction. Only teachers, students, and others directly invited may participate in remote lessons. No one other than educators can record or photograph synchronous lessons. Educators can only record synchronous lessons if they have obtained the active consent from caregivers of all participants.

The following definitions of synchronous remote learning and asynchronous learning have been adopted:

Synchronous remote learning is a form of active learning that occurs when learners and instructors are interacting with one another in real-time, typically through delivery platforms, remote labs, and distance learning technologies such as video conferencing and/or chat, or collaboration and social learning technologies such as social media or remote social learning platforms. While it often occurs online, it could also occur by telephone conference of participants. The goal is for educators and students to communicate in an interactive and collaborative way. Synchronous instruction includes, but is not limited to:

- Whole-group SEL- or community-oriented blocks, such as a morning meeting, homeroom, or flex block
- Whole-class instruction
- Small-group instruction or intervention
- Open drop-in academic support
- 1:1 assistance
- Scaffolded independent or collaborative work
- Collaborating with families/caregivers to assist students.

Asynchronous learning is a form of electronic learning in which participants do not necessarily interact, collaborate, and communicate in real time (e.g., record a video of the lesson as opposed to asking students to tune in at a specific hour to watch it "live").

Grading/Attendance

During remote and hybrid instruction, student attendance will be taken, and students will be assessed using the grading system used for in-person instruction.

Special Education

Students with disabilities are prioritized for in-person instruction during the remote learning phase.

After consultation with caregivers, if a change of services included in a student's IEP is to be considered, the IEP team will provide written notification to the caregivers, according to DESE guidelines.

If the Team determines that remote services can be provided:

Special education faculty and staff, including ESPs may provide inclusion services in general education sessions as part of the full session and through utilizing break out rooms.

Special Education faculty and staff will be allowed to hold small group synchronous sessions, when such activities are able to meet the requirements of students' IEPs.

Ventilation

Comprehensive air exchange testing was completed in all our buildings. The air testing report is available online at <https://tinyurl.com/y4esv7so> Any in-person instruction occurring during the remote learning phase will take place in rooms that meet agreed-upon standards for air exchange. CO2 will be monitored in these rooms to ensure CO2 levels do not exceed 600ppm.

Health and Safety

District personnel will be provided with Personal Protective Equipment (PPE). Staff have been trained in health and safety protocols for use of PPE. Plexiglass barriers have been installed in office areas. Hand sanitizer, soap, and disinfectant will be provided for all employees. The Association will be notified if any individual working or learning in-person tests positive in any building, subject to any legal limitations concerning information sharing.

The main office in each building will remain locked and secure, locked, drop boxes will be installed outside of the buildings to allow for no-contact drop off for documents. Staff will use phone and email to communicate with staff in the main office and only enter when absolutely necessary. A table will be placed outside of each main office for staff documents as needed.

More detailed information about our health and safety protocols is available in the *Northampton Public Schools 2020 School Reopening Plan*.

Technology

Staff required to provide remote instruction who need a device or who do not have internet access in their homes will be provided with the necessary equipment by the district. Staff have been trained in the appropriate platforms for on-line instruction. If a teacher wishes to use additional platform(s) for online instruction, they must obtain permission from their principal. All staff using personal or district-provided technology must comply with the District's acceptable use policy, technology policies, and State and Federal privacy laws and regulations. To help caregivers better facilitate the remote learning of their students, our tech team is offering a series of trainings specifically designed for the adults in our students' lives. The entire schedule of caregiver trainings can be found on our website at the following link: <http://www.northamptonschools.org/project/covid/>

Parent Engagement

IEP team meetings will be held remotely whenever possible. Elementary parent teachers conferences will be held the week of January 25-29.

We hope this information helps to clarify questions or concerns you may have about the start of school next week. Please feel free to reach out to either of us if we can be of assistance during this difficult time. We wish you all a healthy and productive school year.

Sincerely,

John A. Provost, Ed.D.
Superintendent of Schools

Andrea Egitto
NASE President