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MEMO

From: Dr. Julie Hackett, Superintendent of Schools
To: LPS School Community
Re: Return to School Planning
Date: May 21, 2020

International school systems and school systems across the country are working with public health officials to find the most sensible way to return to school. Here in Massachusetts, Governor Baker has established a [Reopening Advisory Board](#), and he recently released his [four phase approach](#). Commissioner Jeff Riley has his own four-phase approach for schools, and he has assembled a K-12 School Reentry Working Group. As part of these State-led processes regarding our return to school, lawmakers recently heard [testimony](#) from Massachusetts educators about remote learning frustrations and budget worries. Unfortunately, it appears that we will not have recommendations on how to plan for a safe return to school next year until the end of June, which is too late for schools to plan effectively.

We cannot wait until the end of June for State guidance given the complexities of PK-12 public school, so our “return to school” planning process is officially underway. Information and resources are constantly in development, and your ideas are important to us. We welcome your input, so please let us know your thoughts and ideas for how we can make the most effective LPS Return to School Plan for the fall. Please feel free to add suggestions and resources to the shared Google Docs below:

LPS PreK-5 Return to School Planning Ideas
LPS Secondary Return to School Planning Ideas

As PK-12 educators, we certainly have our work cut out for us, but I am confident that we will implement a thoughtful, flexible plan that will enable us to continue to provide a high-quality education in challenging times. We are now in the preliminary planning stages. Currently, we are exploring what a safe return to school might look like next year. We are reading and researching several detailed and lengthy plans offered by other states and countries that already have returned to school, and we are in the process of gathering more resources. A few resources that may be helpful are the following:

- [“As Europe Reopens Schools, Relief Combines with Risk,”](#) *New York Times*
- [Baker-Polito Reopening Advisory Board Report](#) - just released.
- [Missouri Pandemic Recovery Considerations Plan](#) - plan under consideration by DESE.
- [Maryland Together Recovery Plan](#)

A Possible Framework for the LPS Return to School Plan

I subscribe to "[Corona Daily](#)," a daily newsletter that tracks worldwide COVID-19 trends. A few weeks ago, I found this resource in the newsletter and posted it on social media: "[COVID-19: A Path Forward](#)." The document is published by the Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health, and it is an interesting, quick read on a "unified plan to save lives and the economy." It contains a helpful infographic that identifies 14 priority areas that will be updated continuously. They have begun to curate a list of resources for priority areas (see #10, "When to Reopen Schools"). As you can see, there is not much information in this category yet, presumably because there is a vetting process and much of the information about a safe return to schools is still in development. I appreciate the infographics and framework that they use, as it is easily accessible to all. We expect to use a format similar to the aforementioned resource. We plan to engage community members in our LPS "return to school" conversation. **If all goes well, the goal is to communicate our "LPS Return to School Plan" by the end of June.**

Key Features and Timelines

There will be a lot to learn as we begin to research and collect ideas, and what we learn will shape the development of our plan. Our strategic approach to planning will continue some key features that we hope to address in the LPS Return to School Plan. Health and safety are the most critical components of our plan, but it may be helpful to take the following concepts into consideration, as well.

Key Features of our LPS Return to School Plan

1. A plan that puts the health and safety of our school community above all else.
2. A plan that is intentional about matters of equity and begins by first addressing the needs of our most vulnerable or marginalized student populations.
3. A plan that builds from our [LPS Shared Values](#).
4. A plan that builds on our strengths (e.g. nearly 100% have devices and Internet connections).
5. A plan that incorporates "reflections" and "lessons learned" during this period of school closure.
6. A plan that allows for flexibility and fluidity in how we deliver instruction.
 - For example, let's harness the concept that was outlined in Governor Baker's four phases related to health metrics dictating the delivery of the educational services; we are able to provide. We may need to develop educational services on a continuum of most restrictive (i.e., all learning done remotely) to less restrictive (i.e. all learning happening back in school buildings with social distancing).
 - A plan that acknowledges varying student needs across the PK-12 range, responding to differences in age-appropriate ways.
7. A plan that incorporates the notion of "consilience" or the compilation of what leading experts from various disciplines have all proposed. Consilience is "when different disciplines all arrive at the same conclusion independently." In other words, how are there points of agreement by experts on topics that pertain to education? For example, what do pediatricians and pedagogical experts agree on in terms of how we can best address our students' social and emotional growth and development during these uncertain times?
<https://covidpathforward.com/>

8. A plan that evolves to address the curricular challenges all educators face if remote learning becomes a longer-term reality.
 - I. Enrichment > II. Power/Bridge Standard > III. Some Form of Hybrid Learning in Fall?
9. A plan that takes into account the needs of ALL stakeholders (students, families, and staff) and builds in continued flexibilities.
 - How do we address the needs of students, families, staff who are at high-risk?
 - How do we build in flexibilities to address the practical needs of families and staff (e.g. daycare)?
10. Identification of 8-10 key possible “priority areas, such as: School-Based Safety Protocols (e.g. nursing, food, transportation, PPE acquisition, etc.), Building Capacity, Curriculum/Instruction/Assessment in Remote Learning Environments, Staffing, Efficiencies, Transportation, etc).

Timeline/Next Steps

- Week of May 18th - Planning memo drafted and shared. Begin research and create shared Google Doc to capture ideas from Union Leaders, LPS Admin. Council, and PK-12 Curriculum Leaders.
- Week of May 25th - Continue to read and review model plans and emerging research; collect ideas that may work for Lexington.
- Week of June 1st - Directors of Innovation and Technology and Director of Planning collaborate to begin developing the infographic as noted above.
- Week of June 8th - Superintendent to host a Zoom “Community Conversation on Remote Learning.” Superintendent moderates a Zoom panel discussion for members of the school community. Begin with a panel discussion that may include students, parents, and staff. Breakout sessions to gather community feedback. The goal is to listen and learn from the experiences of others and find ways to identify best practices that can inform the “LPS Return to School Plan.” May follow a structure similar to KLDI. Director of Professional Learning and Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum, Instruction, Assessment to coordinate and organize.
- Week of June 15th - Work with the Planning Team to review community feedback. Seek input from Lexington Board of Health, Lexington Special Education Parent Advisory Committee (SEPAC), English Language Learners, METCO, and ask the Master Planning Committee to weigh in on matters related to facilities.
- Week of June 22nd - Develop LEA/ALA/LPS Memorandum of Agreement. Finalize Draft LPS Return to School Plan and release to the public for comment. Include a survey to collect feedback from stakeholders.
- Week of June 29th - Consider feedback, review State guidance, and finalize (1) LEA/ALA/LPS MOA and (2) LPS Return to School Plan.