

**Greenfield Public Schools**  
**Special School Committee Meeting**  
**3 Reopening Plans**  
**July 30, 2020**

**Discussion & Decision Points for School Committee:**

- **Approval of 3 plans & initial selection of a preferred model** - The 3 Plans due to DESE on 7/31 include a description of all 3 reopening plans, along with a model the Committee is “leaning towards.” This should be indicated with the documents submitted on 7/31 and should be voted on at the 7/30 model, even if later information requires additional changes.

*“I move to approve the 3 plans as submitted for submission to DESE, and vote to select the \_\_\_\_ model as Greenfield Public Schools’ preferred return-to-school option.”*

- **Change to 180 day requirement** - The Commissioner has authorized reducing the 180-day requirement to 170 days. **The School Committee may vote to amend the School Calendar** to reflect the additional 10 days of Safety Training & Professional Development approved by the Commissioner. PD days will occur prior to students returning under any of the 3 models.

*“I move to amend the School Calendar to reflect 10 additional training and Professional Development days at the beginning of the school year, with the first day of school for students now beginning on \_\_\_\_.”*

- **Bussing** - The Committee may consider loosening restrictions on bussing requirements for students if it wishes to reduce its transportation obligation to only those students required by law. The current policy is available here: [File: BB](#) The state law is available here: [Guide: A Guide for Massachusetts School Administrators - Transportation - School Finance](#)

*“I move to refer bussing to the Policy (and/or Budget & Finance) Sub-Committee for further study.” and/or “I move to amend the bussing as follows” and/or “I move to keep the current bussing policy, while exploring all avenues for students to take advantage of alternative transportation including parent drop-off & pick-up, walk to school, bicycling, and public transportation.”*

- **Staffing** - The Committee may consider whether to authorize the recall of teachers and staff laid-off under the terms of their respective collective bargaining agreements, in order to begin adequately staffing the schools to meet the health & safety requirements for the opening of schools and/or the provision of Remote Services. All 3 models rely upon adequate staffing to ensure appropriate delivery of instructional, mental health, and academic services, and to ensure that appropriate health and safety guidelines are met.

*“In order to adequately staff the schools under the 3 re-opening plans, I move to recall staff who were subject to a Reduction in Force in 2019-2020 - including a school nurse, guidance counselor, and special education teachers - using the funding plan as outlined.”*

- **MCAS** - The new guidance calls for all students to take MCAS in the Spring. The Committee may wish to consider resolutions, advocacy, or further guidance from professional organizations or legislators regarding this requirement.

*“I move to seek additional guidance from the Mass. Association of School Committees regarding the administration of MCAS during Spring 2021.” OR*

*“In light of the pandemic and inequities in student access to Remote learning during Spring of 2020, I move to create a position in opposition to the administration of MCAS in the Spring of 2021.” OR*

*“I move to direct the Superintendent to survey neighboring districts on response to MCAS administration in Spring 2021”*

- **Mask Wearing**- The DESE regulations require all students in Grades 2-12 to wear masks, with the exception of students with medical or other documented needs that prevent mask-wearing. Students in preK-Grade 2 are “strongly encouraged” to wear masks. All staff are required to wear masks. If the Committee adopts an In-Person or Hybrid approach, the Committee may wish to consider extending the requirement for mask-wearing.

*“I move to adopt the DESE guidelines of mask wearing as required for students in Grades 2- 12, with medical and other exceptions as outlined in the guidance, and with masks being strongly encouraged for all students in preK-grade 2. I further move to endorse the requirement for masks for all staff, with medical and other exceptions as outlined in the guidance.” OR*

*“I move to require mask wearing for all students attending under in-person or hybrid models for all students in Kindergarten- Grade 12, with medical and other exceptions as outlined in the guidance, and with masks being strongly encouraged but not required for all students in preK. I further move to endorse the requirement for masks for all staff, with medical and other exceptions as outlined in the guidance.” OR*

*“I move to require mask wearing for all students attending under in-person or hybrid models for all students in preK- Grade 12, with medical and other exceptions as outlined in the guidance. I further move to endorse the requirement for masks for all staff, with medical and other exceptions as outlined in the guidance.”*

### **Additional Considerations:**

The Committee should be aware that the following information is still pending, and could alter the back to school configurations:

- **Number of families who select any given model.** A subsequent survey will be sent out aligned with these 3 models.
- **Staffing availability.** Due to medical concerns or lack of full-time childcare in their home district, some teachers and staff will be unable to report to work full-time. All 3 models rely on adequate staffing, however the in-person and hybrid staffing models are particularly vulnerable to this concern. Many types of leave are covered under the Families First Coronavirus Relief Act.
- **Substitutes.** Even if a high number of staff return to school in-person or hybrid, a greater number of substitute teachers and staff will be required to adhere to the more stringent health and safety guidelines. For example, in a regular school year, it is not uncommon for a teacher to come to school if they have a cough or sore throat but are afebrile. Substitutes will similarly be required for Cafeteria, Custodial, Administrative Assistants (who do not typically have substitutes) and Instructional Assistants. The greater care required regarding COVID-19 means that a greater pool of substitutes will be required, however indications are that fewer subs are anticipated to be available.
- **Prevalences of COVID-19 in our community.** Specific cases of COVID-19 will be responded to according to the DESE guidance and in consultation with local health officials, but changes in community prevalence of COVID-19 may affect reopening plans
- **Transportation -** Due to the reduced capacity for students to be transported on school district and contracted vehicles due to the recent DESE guidance, GPS' ability to open under an in-person or hybrid model depend heavily on the ability of many families to provide transportation for their children and/or for children to walk or bike to school. Previous assessments have shown that many walk-to-school routes within the legal walk limits are not safe for children, as young as Kindergarten, to walk to school. In addition, many families do not have cars and rely on school transportation. Finally, previous efforts to create "walking school busses" may not meet adequate health guidance for social distancing, unless adult supervision can be provided. Additional data is being gathered by the Transportation Coordinator to assess the impact of the newly-released DESE Transportation Guidance.

- **State & local budget** - The state budget, including Chapter 70 and Circuit Breakers funding that the district heavily relies upon, remain unknown. In-person and hybrid models have significant additional costs in both staffing and operations (e.g. masks, cleaning supplies, additional custodians, transportation, etc). Should further reductions occur in state or local aid, and/or if the district is unable to restore current positions in Nursing, Special Education, Guidance, and other positions, this severely impacts our ability to operate under the in-person or hybrid models.
- **Additional Guidance** - DESE has been releasing detailed in-depth guidance frequently, along with state and federal agencies. Approximately 150 pages of guidance on various topics was issued by DESE in the month of July alone. The districts' plans are subject to change based on updated guidance or requirements.

**Outstanding Concerns regarding the models presented:**

Districts must “certify” that they can meet the DESE guidance under the model adopted by the School Committee. The following outstanding concerns would need to be resolved in order to make such a representation to DESE.

- **In-Person Model** - Students are distanced at least 3- feet apart, however, to eat in classrooms, students need to be 6- apart. This means students MUST eat outdoors, or enough students must opt-out of in-person learning, or we'd have to shorten the school day in order to offer a Grab N Go - in order to meet safety requirements.
- **Specials Guidance** - New guidance released on 7/25 recommends that special classes (e.g. Music, PE, Theatre, Band, etc) be “fully or partially remote” and “recommends, and at times requires, that these be outdoors.” This poses a staffing challenge as these special classes serve multiple purposes, including providing “coverage” for teachers who are preparing for their classes while students are in Specials. If classes are provided remotely, who is supervising them? If classes are provided outdoors, what happens in inclement or very cold weather? Teams are meeting today to discuss this guidance received on Friday night after business hours.
- **HVAC, Heating & Ventilation** - DESE guidance recommends increased air flow and additional ventilation whenever possible. We have taken extensive measures to improve HVAC air exchange, increase intake of fresh air, and purchase additional equipment including fans in every classroom. However, state law requires all municipal buildings to have heat from October 15 on, and there are thresholds for minimum heating / cooling in schools. In order to maintain these heating/ cooling standards, and to prevent skyrocketing energy costs, ventilation may not be able to be enhanced with outdoor air significantly. In addition, many windows at GMS do not operate fully and GHS windows have safety latches that limit the amount they can open.

- **Student Responsibilities** - DESE guidance state that students may clean / sanitize “high-touch and shared areas such as desks, if developmentally appropriate and safe to do so.” District staff and medical providers are currently reviewing whether this is developmentally appropriate and safe. If developmentally appropriate and safe, how do we ensure that it is done effectively and mitigates against transmission of COVID-19?
- **Family Responsibilities** - DESE guidance directs families to monitor their children’s temperature and symptoms daily, and relies upon this (as opposed to at-school screenings or testing) as the primary method of preventing students who are ill from entering the school building. This assumes that families have access to reliable thermometers, are home to assess this before the student goes to school, that they are knowledgeable about all possible symptoms, that they have purchased masks and other necessary supplies, and that they are reliably reporting any such symptoms, even those that are minor, to the school. These assumptions place a lot of responsibility on family members, which include those experiencing economic instability and who may not be able to purchase such supplies; experiencing homelessness; with limited English proficiency;
- **Transportation** - The new guidance regarding transportation is under review by transportation staff. It is not presently clear whether this model is feasible and raises concerns about equity for how students are transported to school if families do not have cars.

**Cost Estimates:**

The attempt to cost out the various models continues to be a challenge due to the continuous changes communicated from the state and federal levels. What we do know is the following: Greenfield Public Schools has received the following allocation awards - \$411,187 in ESSERF Grant funds and \$422,550 in CvRF. Both of these grants are intended to help with the health, safety, and educational programming for this coming school year. The city of Greenfield has been allocated \$1,539,408 of funding. In discussions with the city, they are aware, they have been, and continue to be supportive of assisting the school needs with some of these funds. The above are what we know of for sure. DESE issues a competitive technology grant to assist with the technological support. Greenfield applied for \$222,165.

Given the tremendous variability in the models, number of students participating in each, and fiscal unknowns given the lack of a state budget, the following estimates are provided based on quotes that have been obtained for projected work under the 3 models. As evident by the range of costs due to the varying needs of each plan, at this point in time, these estimates are just that, estimates. Some costs (e.g. those related to Remote Learning) will be required no matter what model we select, as DESE guidance indicates that families should have access to Remote Learning for medical and/or safety reasons. Cost estimates are underway, but will be aided by the Committee’s selection of a model.

**Some potential / projected costs are listed below:**

- **Staffing** - The district estimates that in addition to restoring cut positions including Nurse, Guidance, and Special Education staff, it will need to add several specialized positions to meet the requirements of the In-person or hybrid model, including:
  - Medical Assistants - 6 additional (1 per building) - \$150,000- \$180,000 plus benefits (exploring the use of CNA or RN students from area schools)
  - Custodians - 3 additional (.5 per building minimum) - \$90 - 120,000 plus benefits
  - School Psychologists - 2 additional - \$100,000 - \$120,000 plus benefits
  - Lunch & Recess Monitors - 2 additional per school x 6 = \$150- \$180,000
  - Bus Monitors - Min 8 - cost TBD from Kuzmeskus
  
- **Facilities & Equipment Costs** -
  - Outdoor Instructional Areas - Approx \$20- \$30,000 for tent/ pavilion rental
  - Picnic Tables - Approx \$11,000 for 80 picnic tables (12 -13 / school)
  - Windows replacement - outside vendor to improve ventilation (TBD)
  - Plexiglass installation - main entrances and prek-2 classrooms - \$30-\$40,000
  - Cleaning Supplies - Electrostatic Sprayers, etc.
  
- **COVID-19 Related Technology & Curriculum Costs**
  - District Remote Learning Platform - pending release of state bid information
  - Individualized remote learning supports for high-needs learners: approx \$20k
  - Individual Supplies for all Students (in the event of closure): (TBD)
  - Workbooks and instructional materials for elementary students (in the event of closure): (TBD)
  - Additional Chromebooks - \$140,000
  - Additional Wi-Fi devices for outdoor access - (TBD)
  - Training & PD - \$14,000 district-wide training