



Greenfield Public Schools

Frequently Asked Questions about Returning to In-Person Learning

The questions and answers below are our FAQs around the return to in-person learning. They are arranged by category: remote learning, transportation, meals and free time, classrooms, COVID concerns, and MCAS testing.

Remote learning concerns

1. Is it mandatory for my child to come back to school?

On March 5, 2021, the Massachusetts Board of Elementary and Secondary Education approved the Commissioner's plan to have elementary schools return to in-person learning on April 5, 2021, middle schools return to in-person learning on April 28, 2021, and high schools return to in-person learning at a date yet to be determined. The Greenfield Public Schools plan is to have students in grades PK-4 return to in-person learning on April 5th, and GMS and GHS students return to in-person learning on April 28th. Parents still have the option to have their children stay in remote learning for the remainder of the school year.

2. How will you ensure that the education of students who remain remote will not be compromised by a teacher's split attention between in person and remote students? If you decide to keep your child remote, what will that look like?

As has been the case since the pandemic started, students will have a combination of synchronous and asynchronous learning. During those times when the teacher will be teaching a lesson, students who are remaining remote can join their peers in the classroom. During those times when students are working independently, students will be completing assignments either in the classroom or remotely. Some independent work will require the use of technology to complete. Other assignments will be more hands-on. Teachers will make those judgments about which mode of work will make best sense in the context of their lessons.

3. Can a student switch back to remote if they start in person and are too overwhelmed? If so, will they be penalized and will they keep the same teacher? Will our kids have the same teacher(s) if we choose to keep them home for the remainder of the year?

Students may switch back to remote learning at any time. Please be sure to notify your child's principal in advance. There will not be any penalty for changing back to remote learning. We will try to keep children with their teachers, but we are not able to guarantee that at this time.

Families who wish to return from remote learning back to in-person learning will need to allow four weeks before their child returns to school. The impact on the classroom arrangements, provision for additional students in common areas, meals distribution, transportation, and planning for integrating the students back into the life of the school is a set of logistical issues that will take some time. We thank families for your understanding and cooperation.

4. Do you anticipate teachers having to teach both remote and hybrid simultaneously or will there be staff to teach in person only and staff to teach remotely?

Teachers will be teaching simultaneously during lessons that they deliver. Independent work time for students will be accomplished asynchronously.

5. How is the district prepared to handle student's anxieties and fears returning to school?

We are working to ensure that we have a welcoming environment for our students. As with the start of any school year, time will be spent working on rituals and routines so students will know what to expect and what is expected of them. If a student is experiencing heightened anxieties, we have counselors on staff who can assist.

Transportation concerns

1. Please explain drop off and pick up guidelines as this was already very complicated pre-COVID. Can parents pick up in person, can different adults pick up on specific days, what is the process if someone else needs to pick your child up last minute, will pick up times be staggered and/or separated by grade level, etc. Where can I find my bus schedule?

Each school has established pick up and drop off areas for buses and those who will be driven to school or will be walking. As with any normal school year, any differences to who might be picking up and dropping off your child should be communicated to the schools by writing a note or calling the office. Once we know who will be riding the bus, bus schedules will be posted on our website. Families will be notified by our School Messenger system when the routes are available.

2. What will our transportation options be? Drop off at some of the schools is at the same time. What sort of leeway will be offered? It will be impossible to drop off children at two different sites at the same time.

Drop offs will be a process as buses and vehicles will be handled in an orderly manner with the least amount of contact possible. We understand that families will need some time to get from one school to another and that should be easily accomplished.

3. What options do you have in place for working parents that cannot drop off and/or pick up at those scheduled times?

At this point in time, we do not have the capacity to supervise students before or after school.

Breakfast/Lunch/snack time/free time

1. Please explain the breakfast and lunch process. Will there still be a menu to anticipate choices? Will all grab and go food be cold? Will all students eat in their classrooms? How will snack work? If students are three feet apart, how can that possibly be safe when all students will have their masks off for eating? (It's not safe- so what's the plan)?

Menus will be posted on our website and schools will share the menu via their newsletters. Items will be grab and go, as we are not able to have students go through a traditional line. There will be a combination of hot and cold options. Some students will eat in their classrooms, others will be eating in other spaces. Your principal can tell you the details for your child's school. Students will be 6 feet apart at school, person-to-person. The furniture will no less than 3 feet apart.

2. As a student what will my lunch period look like if I return to school? What will recess look like? Can we be with friends or will we be stuck in just our classroom all day? Lunch time could be a particularly vulnerable time in school. What will the process be for lunch? Will there be an opportunity for students to eat outside? Will there be tents or could parents assist in providing all students camp chairs to get them outside for lunches? Can I pack a lunch?

The specific details for lunch and recess will be determined by school. Some students will be eating in classrooms, while others are eating in larger spaces. We will use outside spaces as often as possible. Students can bring a lunch from home. We ask that families be mindful of those with food allergies and plan accordingly (avoid products with nuts, etc.). We are grateful to our PTOs who have been proactive in providing seating for outdoor activities.

3. Will students have access to water and bathroom breaks and mask breaks? How much opportunity will there be to be outside during the school day? Will the tents come back? Will there be opportunity for classes to be held outside? Will there be unstructured time outside for students to play?

Students will have access to bathrooms during the day. Families are welcome to send students in with filled water bottles. We are working to provide additional water to students as well. Teachers are being encouraged to use outdoors for classes and we are getting WiFi access available outside. There will be times for unstructured play for our youngest students, following guidelines for distancing and mask-wearing.

What will classrooms look like?

1. Will there be an opportunity to tour classrooms before school starts?

Tours will be set up for PreK and Kindergarten students. Be on the look-out for more details from your child's school. A virtual tour has been posted to the district website for everyone else. Due to the work that is being done to prepare for students, widespread classroom tours are not available.

2. Will the kids that return to school be sitting at their desks on laptops or will they be in a more 'normal' classroom? With the new CDC regulations of only 3 feet keep this population safe? How will H/S and M/S students be monitored to ensure they are not having physical contact?

There will be a combination of the use of technology and other interactive opportunities for learning. GPS will be using the standard of 6 feet between students, person-to-person. This means that desks may be a bit closer, but not less than 3 feet.

3. Please explain what in person learning will look like. Will students continuing [continue?] to be logging on to specific learning platforms daily to complete and submit work? Will remote learners be on a Google Meet while others are in the classrooms, what happens to remote learners if there is outdoor in person instruction, will remote learners keep the same teacher, etc.?

In-person learning will look similar to what it has in the past. Teachers will be teaching lessons and students will be using a combination of hands-on and computer-based tasks for their own work, as appropriate. As noted earlier in this document, we are setting up WiFi access for outdoor lessons and activities so remote learners can participate.

4. What are the specific guidelines and supports teachers are receiving about how to teach in-person and online simultaneously? How is that being communicated to teachers and parents?

Teachers will be given the opportunity to participate in professional learning on simultaneous learning. More details will be shared with teachers as we get closer to the time of reopening.

COVID Concerns

1. Will all of the GPS staff & teachers have had their shots prior to children on campus? What about all the parents that still are waiting to receive their shots? What is the rush? Why not stay remote until next fall when everyone that wants a shot hopefully has had the opportunity to get one BEFORE the return to school?

Educators and support staff have had vaccines made available to them on specific dates. Our staff members have done a remarkable job seeking out appointments to get vaccinated and we have been working with the City of Greenfield and other providers to set up clinics for educators.

The decision to return to in-person learning is coming from the Massachusetts Commissioner of Education and the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education. Families have the option to stay remote for the remainder of the 2020-21 school year.

2. What will daily cleaning look like? What will air circulation look like? Will teachers have soap, sanitizers, tissues, Clorox wipes and other necessary supplies in their classrooms?

Daily cleaning will take place by all staff on a daily basis. Teachers and other staff will have access to the necessary supplies for this task.

3. Given the desire to keep sick/ill students home, as a precaution, will those students have the option to attend school remotely for that day or days so they don't fall behind? If this isn't a current option, why not? Especially considering it would support the district's intent of stopping the spread, while not negatively impacting the student who chooses to do the responsible thing.

If a child is ill, as a precaution, we would encourage you to keep the student home and, if they feel well enough, to join the class remotely until they feel well enough and have tested negative for the virus.

MCAS testing

1. Will students be taking the MCAS? How will that work? Can we opt out?

The state is moving ahead with MCAS testing. There are several groups, including our own School Committee, the Massachusetts Association of School Superintendents, the Massachusetts Association of School Committees, the Massachusetts Teachers Association, and countless others who are pushing our state and federal legislators to waive testing requirements this spring. We are waiting for more guidance about how these might be administered, should waivers not be granted. Massachusetts is not an opt-out state, so this is not a possibility at this time.