



Worcester Public Schools

Fall 2021 Learning Plan

Guidelines & Protocols for Opening Schools
August 2021

Superintendent:
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School Committee:

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Dear Families,

Beginning on August 30, 2021, the Worcester Public Schools will provide in-person learning, 5 days a week for all students. The Commissioner of Education has stated there will be no remote learning for any students in Massachusetts. Updated guidance from the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, released July 30, 2021, requires all students wear masks while on the school bus. **On August 11, 2021, the Worcester School Committee voted that all students and faculty must wear masks while inside all school buildings.**

DESE and DPH continue to strongly recommend that all faculty, staff and eligible students receive the COVID-19 vaccine. In addition to recommending COVID-19 vaccination, it continues to be essential that the educational and public health communities, as well as cities and towns, work together to ensure as many children and adults as possible receive flu vaccines this fall. This will reduce the number of students who need to stay home due to illness.

This document is presented to our families to provide guidance for a safe and successful 2021-22 school year. I will continue to update you on current guidance from the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education and the Department of Public Health by posting updates on our website, worcesterschools.org, and through social media and Connect-Ed phone messages.

WPS staff are prepared and excited to move to full in-person learning. WPS principals, teachers, families and community agencies continue to work together to meet our students' needs. Thank you for your ongoing support. We look forward to a successful school year.

Maureen Binienda

"If everyone is moving forward together, then success takes care of itself." -Henry Ford

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Guiding Principles

Healthy Educational Environment

We will ensure that appropriate measures to protect the safety and health of our students and staff is a top priority by:

- Providing clean and sanitized buildings
- Investing in and maintaining equipment to ensure air quality improvements and safety
- Prioritizing COVID-19 mitigation training for staff and students and school routines have been designed to minimize risk

Robust Instructional Opportunities

We will provide high quality in-person instruction to students by:

- Ensuring students have access to a district issued device and internet
- Modifying curriculum programs to support multiple learning models
- Having continuous professional development integrating instructional technology
- Providing modern research based learning platforms

Social Emotional Supports for Students

We are mindful of the pandemic's impact on students and we are prioritizing student well-being through:

- Specialized and individualized SEL support
- Structured schedules with time for check-ins and small group supports

Equitable Learning Opportunities for Students

We will provide high quality learning for all students through:

- Assessing all students to ensure that all their learning needs are being met
- Ensuring that Students with Disabilities receive appropriate support and instruction
- Ensuring that English Language Learners receive appropriate support and instruction
- Continuing to implement culturally responsive, learner-centered practices in all lessons
- Providing varied accommodations in order to make learning accessible for all students

Transparent Communication

We are committed to providing timely information to families and community members regarding the shifts and changes associated with COVID-19 school procedures through:

- Frequent updates to the website with translated information
- Leveraging multiple ways to communicate with families including community forums, ConnectEd messages, text messages, phone calls, social media, and website updates

Student & Staff Safety

District Guidelines

- Students are requested to bring two masks to school each day
- Masks and gloves will be available upon request for all staff and students
- Masks will be expected to be worn at all times within the school buildings, except during mask breaks. Masks are not required outside (e.g., on the playground)
- Due to the importance of in-person learning, at this time DESE has not implemented any social distancing requirements. However, it is recommended, whenever possible, social distancing should be implemented to the extent possible
- The number of people within a closed area will be limited to reduce exposure to Covid-19 to the extent possible
- Hand sanitizers have been placed in every classroom and other key locations at all schools
- Additional PPE and cleaning supplies are available at our schools including masks, disinfectant wipes, shields, gloves, hand sanitizer and gowns



Classroom Setup

District Guidelines

- There are no distancing setup requirements for desks and tables. However, to the extent possible, desks and tables should be separated
- Students will have seating assignments for contact tracing if necessary
- Signage of protocols are posted

School Supplies

District Guidelines

- Lockers have been reopened and will be assigned to middle and high school students
- Students are required to bring their chargers, earbuds and district issued devices fully charged to school each day
- Students should not bring their hotspot into school
- Students are not allowed to use a personal device in school



Breakfast and Lunch

District Guidelines

- All water bubblers and fountains are shut off
- Food service is providing water during the school day
- Breakfast and lunch are being eaten in classrooms or school cafeterias



Recess

District Guidelines

- All elementary schools have scheduled recess breaks
- Students wash hands after recess
- Playgrounds are open



Mask Breaks

District Guidelines

- There are scheduled mask breaks for students
- The breaks are based on the student's age and needs
- When on a mask break, students are in designated areas, maintaining social distancing when possible

Hand Washing

District Guidelines

- Students and staff are required to wash their hands frequently
- Hand washing with soap and warm water for 20 seconds is the recommendation
- Hand sanitizer is available in every school



Bathroom Procedures

District Guidelines

- Safety protocols are established at schools based on bathroom location and capacity
- Bathroom breaks are carried out as they would be during normal school times
- Signage is posted to remind students to wash their hands
- Soap dispensers are filled on a regular basis

School & Systemwide Staff Protocols

District Guidelines

- All school based and systemwide staff are required to sign in at a designated area
- When visiting school buildings, masks will be worn by all staff
- Work spaces in the building may be utilized for specialized instruction

Visitor Access to the Building



District Guidelines

- Visitors should call ahead and arrange a time to come into the building
- Visitors are required to sign in with their name, purpose, and phone number
- Visitors must wear masks at all times
- Limit the number of visitors in the school office at the same time
- Staff will assist visitors with their needs
- There will be no visitors volunteering in classrooms for the beginning of the school year

Volunteerism

We would like to get the year going and the staff and children in routines before we open to the public for volunteer purposes. Because we do not know who is sick or not, or vaccinated or not, particularly with our K-6 students being unvaccinated, volunteerism may be unsafe at this time. We will continue to evaluate this measure as we want you to see our work in action and be active participants in your student's education.

Air Quality and Cleaning Protocol

District Guidelines

- We upgraded all of the buildings to improve air flow
- Needlepoint Bipolar Ionization systems were installed in all locations to improve air quality
- Each classroom is provided with disinfectant wipes to use on desks and materials for frequent washing
- Hand sanitizer has been purchased for all schools and is replenished when needed

Summary of Ventilation Systems Work

How NPBI Works

With a cough or a sneeze, any individual can introduce harmful pathogens into the air. To minimize exposure, NPBI produces millions of positively and negatively charged ions that travel through the air via the HVAC system, continuously seeking out and attaching to harmful particles — including pathogens' surface proteins, rendering the pathogens ineffective.

Harmful Particles
(including pathogens)

NPBI renders the pathogens
ineffective by introducing millions
of positive and negative ions

The ions breakdown harmful VOCs
into harmless compounds like O₂,
CO₂, N₂, and H₂O.



Source: EMCOR Facilities Services

White paper on Improving Indoor Air Quality Needlepoint Bipolar Ionization

Emcorfacilities.com

Reducing the Spread of Disease

Rapid, Continuous Air Cleaning NPBI technology releases ions that immediately begin attaching to particulates, and, as ions enter the air stream, they offer continuous cleaning throughout the entire facility.

Inactivate Pathogens When ions come into contact with pathogens, they not only make them more filterable, their microbicidal effects also reduce the infectivity of the virus.



PATHOGEN	TIME EXPOSED	KILL/INACTIVATION RATE
E. coil	15 minutes	99.68%*
C. Diff	30 minutes	86.50%*
Noro Virus	30 minutes	93.50%*
MRSA	30 minutes	96.24%*
COVID-19	30 minutes	99.40%*

*White papers that detail these results are available upon request from the manufacturer of the needlepoint bipolar ionization technology.

Source: EMCOR Facilities Services

White paper on Improving Indoor Air Quality Needlepoint Bipolar Ionization emcorfacilities.com

Transportation

District Guidelines

- Students should face forward at all times and refrain from eating, singing, shouting or sharing items while in transit
- Windows will stay open for the duration of the ride
- Students, drivers and monitors must wear masks at all times
- Bus schedules will be posted on the WPS website, worcesterschools.org



Food Services for Families

District Guidelines

- Breakfast and lunch is served in school to all students
- Afternoon meals will be provided for students participating in afterschool activities

Nurse's Office and/or Covid-19 Safe Space

District Guidelines

- Every school has a nurse and a COVID-19 point person
- There are disinfection procedures followed after each student visits the nurse's office
- If a student tests positive or presents with COVID-19 symptoms during the school day, the student will be placed in a separate room, monitored by staff until the student can be picked up



Students and Staff Exhibiting COVID-19 Symptoms

District Guidelines

- We respond promptly and effectively when there is possible exposure to COVID-19
- An individual who is symptomatic at home should stay home and get tested
- If a student or staff member is positive, notify the building principal
- A student that is symptomatic on the bus will immediately be brought to the nurse's office for assessment
- A student that is symptomatic while in school will wait in the nurse's office or COVID-19 Safe Space until they can be picked up
- Symptomatic students will require a pickup and will not be allowed to ride the bus home
- A staff member who appears symptomatic at work will discuss coverage with the principal and follow district protocols
- A student or staff member who tests positive must notify the school, assist with the district procedures on close contact and Covid-19 positive status procedures and follow district guidelines for quarantining or isolation

Quarantine/Isolation Protocols for Covid-19

- Any student or staff who tests positive for COVID-19 will follow isolation protocols for a minimum of 7-10 days
- The District is researching if the DESE new “test and stay” program can be available to WPS students and staff. Under “test and stay”, asymptomatic close contacts will have the option to remain in school and be tested daily with BinaxNOW for at least 5 days
- The district continues to partner with Family Health Center to provide symptomatic and close contact students and staff free COVID-19 testing. The school nurse at every school will provide the required paperwork



Protocols for Potential School Closures

District Guidelines

In the event of possible school closure, we will:

- Consult with Worcester Regional Department of Public Health
- Consult with the Worcester School Committee
- Consult with the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education
- Determine if it is necessary to shut down a classroom, wing or entire building for a short time by consulting with necessary stakeholders and WPS administration for a final decision
- Inform the school community and communicate school reopening plans

District Contacts

Superintendent: Maureen Binienda 508-799-3117

Deputy Superintendent: Dr. Susan O'Neil 508-799-3644

School Safety Director, Covid-19 District Coordinator: Rob Pezzella 508-799-3472

Chief Financial and Operations Officer: Brian Allen 508-799-3401

Elementary Schools Managers: Dr. Marie Morse, Ellen Kelley 508-799-3264

Secondary School Manager: Dr. Tim Sippel 508-799-3264

Director of Nursing: Dr. Deborah McGovern 508-799-8553

Resources

[DESE Guidance: Protocols for Responding to Covid-19 Scenarios August 13, 2021](#)

Covid-19 question email address: Covid-19@worcesterschools.net

