



ANDOVER PUBLIC SCHOOLS

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SCHOOL COMMITTEE

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Superintendent of Schools

August 28, 2020

To the APS Community,

I would like to address some questions the School Committee is hearing from families regarding return to school for APS employees and provide you with information about the start of the school year. We are aware educators across Massachusetts have opposed the return to school plans developed under state mandates and set forth by their districts and school committees, specifically any plan that calls for a return to in-person work. I want to assure our community that our buildings are safe, and we are well positioned to enable in-person learning with the district's hybrid learning plan to start the new year.

Over the summer, the School Committee, all district administrators and the Return to School Task Force spent thousands of hours and invested hundreds of thousands of dollars planning for the 2020-21 school year with health and safety of our students and staff as a top priority. Twenty-six teachers, instructional assistants, social workers, and special education staff served on the Return to School Task Force to provide their recommendations and perspective in the district's final plan that was submitted to the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE). The district's plan is compliant with DESE's requirements. In fact, I am confident we exceed these requirements.

We have made significant efforts to ensure that we can return to our buildings safely. The district asked the highly qualified HVAC experts employed by the Town of Andover Facilities Department to evaluate the ventilation systems in each schoolhouse. Among these experts is a mechanical engineer with over eight years of prior experience as a private HVAC designer in healthcare, with expertise in the design of negative pressure isolation rooms for infectious patients. Her experience has been particularly relevant to COVID-19 school HVAC evaluations.

Additionally, at the request of the Andover Education Association, the district recently entered into a contract with an outside HVAC contractor to conduct an independent inspection of the ventilation systems in each school building. The contractor expects to finish its evaluation and report for each building on or before September 4, 2020.

For additional information, you can view [a summary](#) of already purchased PPE, cleaning protocols, wayfinding and signage information, COVID-19 response protocols, safety metrics for shifting learning models (in-person versus remote), updates on HVAC evaluations, and the [district's response](#) to the Andover Education Association's (AEA) questions about HVAC.

About APS: The mission of the Andover Public Schools, in partnership with the entire Andover community, is to educate by engaging and inspiring students to develop as self-reliant, responsible citizens who are thinkers, problem solvers, and contributors prepared to participate in an evolving global society.

Negotiations with the AEA are on-going and the School Committee has, and will continue to meet, its bargaining obligations. Educators will return to their school buildings on Monday, August 31st, to begin ten days of professional development, curriculum planning, collaboration, training, and other professional work prior to the first student school day on September 16th. This work will include training on safety protocols, the use of personal protective equipment, wayfinding under distancing requirements, cleaning procedures and health mandates.

We recognize these are unprecedented times, and it is important for us to share with the community the information and work and preparation that the district has taken to provide a safe work and learning environment. We are grateful for all the work that has gone into developing plans and protocols for the safe return to in-person learning for our students. We are looking forward to beginning the new school year.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Shannon Scully". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "S" and a long, sweeping tail.

Shannon I. Scully, chairperson
Andover School Committee

