



ANDOVER PUBLIC SCHOOLS

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For Immediate Release

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Andover Public Schools Plan for 2020-21 School Year Continues in Absence of Agreement with Teachers' Union

School Committee and AEA at Impasse following Twelve Bargaining Sessions and Full-Day Mediation

Andover, Mass. -- The Andover School Committee and Andover Education Association (AEA) have concluded the process of impact bargaining regarding the district's reopening plan for the 2020-2021 school year. The teams met for more than 40 hours over twelve bargaining sessions and reached impasse at the end of their bargaining session on October 27, 2020. In an effort to break the impasse, the parties spent one full day with a mediator from the Department of Labor Relations (DLR) but were unable to formalize a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) regarding the school reopening impacts on educators.

Andover's plan for the 2020-21 school year will continue, even in the absence of a formal MOA with the AEA.

On August 10th, the School Committee approved Andover Public Schools' return-to-school plan that supports multiple learning models (fully in-person, fully remote and a hybrid of in-person and remote), as required by the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) and with guidance from public health officials. Students returned to school under these models more than six weeks ago.

"We appreciate the time so many educators have spent talking and problem solving with us over the past several months. Their observations have helped improve the district's back-to-school operations, and we are grateful for the feedback," said Andover School Committee Chairperson Shannon Scully. "It is disappointing that we are unable to formalize an MOA with the AEA after extensive, good faith bargaining and a full day of DLR mediation. Nonetheless, we are eager to continue the success of this school year under the professionalism of our educators."

Though there was agreement in concept regarding many current operational aspects of school reopening, there are four areas where the School Committee and the AEA were unable to reach an agreement: requirements for synchronous instruction; consistent use of Schoology, the new district-wide learning management system; accountability through educator evaluations; and the efficacy of additional ventilation protocols in school buildings. The School Committee and AEA discussed the impact of these management decisions at length, and the Committee met all of its bargaining obligations.

"We are pleased with the launch of the 2020-21 school year and believe our students are being provided the best possible opportunities under these unique circumstances," notes Scully. "Andover educators are working incredibly hard during this unprecedented school year, and we will continue to support them while keeping health, safety, and students as our highest priorities."

* *The four areas of impasse are detailed on page 2 of this release.*

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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.

Four Areas of Impasse

Synchronous Instruction

The district's plan requires all educators to provide synchronous instruction, including live video instruction and conferencing between teachers and students at all grade levels, to maximize real-time interaction with students who are learning remotely or are learning at home in the hybrid model.

Schoology

To facilitate the blended learning required to support both in-person and remote instruction, the district introduced the learning management system, Schoology, for the 2020-21 school year. Educators have been provided with numerous and on-going professional development opportunities to incorporate Schoology as part of their instruction. The district expects educators to implement basic aspects Schoology, including assignment posting and grading, aligned with professional development milestones. During the 2020-2021 school year, teachers will be provided with professional time to post end-of-term grades in the traditional ASPEN system, in addition to posting daily grades in Schoology.

Educator Evaluation

To comply with educator evaluation requirements under state law, the district will continue to evaluate teachers with both announced and unannounced observations. The district's hybrid and remote academy models do not change these legal requirements.

Ventilation

The district has made significant efforts to ensure students and staff can learn and work in our school buildings safely. These efforts include engaging an independent HVAC contractor to review each school building's ventilation systems. The contractor provided a comprehensive report in September, which states that the district's buildings meet, and in many cases exceed, the guidelines outlined in the ASHRAE guidance for the reopening of our schools. The district remains committed to providing a safe environment for our students and educators and offered the AEA the opportunity to participate in a *Health and Safety Committee* to consider scientifically-supported practices and procedures regarding indoor air quality.