



SCHOOL COMMITTEE

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 Interim Superintendent

February 1, 2021

Dear APS Community,

As promised, over the next five months I will be communicating with you regularly on topics of concern and interest to you. This week, I am providing an update on our plans for returning to in-person learning for all students. This is an important topic for our parents, and of course for students and teachers. Below is a table that reflects my thinking now for how we might move forward through this school year, and where we might be by next fall.

At recent PTO/PAC meetings and in School Committee meetings, I said I envision the plan to unfold in three STAGES, with precise calendar dates unknown at this time, unknown because COVID will determine our calendar, not I. As much as we all want to return to school as it was pre-pandemic, we must put the health, welfare and safety of our students and staff first. Right now, the news is not promising. As new, more contagious, strains loom, scientists and Dr. Fauci tell us we are in the most dangerous period of all. So, I have urged our APS community to support our current delivery models for the time being with our effective mitigation guidelines of mask wearing, safe distancing, and frequent hand sanitizing.

Below is a chart for moving through the 3 STAGES. Within each stage are two or three colors (possible scenarios). They are **GREEN** for moving on to the next stage, **YELLOW** for staying put with the model(s) we have in place, and **RED** for moving back to the previous stage or model.

STAGE 1 - Now	STAGE 2	STAGE 3
YELLOW: Staying with the Hybrid model & Virtual Academy	YELLOW: Implementing small increases for in-student learning in schools, according to each school's capacity	GREEN: Full return to pre-COVID in-student learning
RED: But returning to full remote, if necessary	RED: But returning to yellow or even Red in Stage 1, if necessary	YELLOW or RED: But returning to STAGE 1 at yellow or red, if necessary
Timelines for each STAGE		
February to when surge begins to ebb	STAGE 2 to STAGE 3	STAGE 3 GREEN , when we reach herd immunity via vaccinations

Even though we are in STAGE 1, I have met with all APS principals to request them to work with their staff to brainstorm ways to take small steps to move to STAGE 2. There is no question that teachers, students and parents want to increase in-person time for students. Everyone agrees about that. But, we do so safely. As I've discussed with parents and principals, possibly each school's Stage 2 small steps will look somewhat different given staffing, scheduling, and schoolhouse capacity. In some cases, even a small increase in student in-person time, might require that the Department of Elementary Education (DESE) or the CDC relax COVID-19 mitigation guidelines.

We know that our new President wants all students and staff back in-person in 100 days, but we also know that to do so will require additional funding from the federal level, and an easing of mitigation guidelines. Please know our school leaders and those in the Central Office are working very hard to bring our students back to school full time as soon possible. As I continue to reach out to the APS community, I welcome the opportunity to engage all of you in constructive conversations. I am eager to hear your concerns as well as hear your ideas for how best to move through the 3 stages.

Sincerely,



Claudia L. Bach