

Somerset Public Schools

Somerset Berkley Regional  
School District



SOMERSET BERKLEY REGIONAL  
SOMERSET PUBLIC SCHOOLS  
*"All Students Achieving Excellence"*

# REOPENING SCHOOLS 2020-2021

August 10, 2020

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## Executive Summary

In response to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, the Somerset Public Schools and Somerset Berkley Regional School District have developed this reopening plan for the 2020-2021 school year. On August 6, 2020, the Somerset School Committee and Somerset Berkley Regional School Committee unanimously approved the superintendent's recommendation to implement a phased-in learning model, beginning with remote learning before transitioning to hybrid learning, and, finally, to in-person learning. Regardless of which model is being used at the time, any student who is not able or willing to attend school in-person choosing a remote learning model instead will be able to do so.

Due to the current restrictions and guidance, full in-person is not an option at this time, posing the greatest health and safety risks to students and staff as it would require a three-foot separation between students in classes. A hybrid model in which students would be split into four cohorts, could be implemented with separations between students at 6 feet. Of these four cohorts, the two main cohorts would attend school in-person two days per week while learning remotely three days each week. A third cohort consisting of students identified as high needs would attend school up to four days per week while learning remotely one day each week. The fourth cohort of students would consist of those students who opt to learn through a fully remote format.

Due to the anticipated, frequent disruptions to the school day in a hybrid model due to COVID-19 circumstances as well as an expected teacher shortage and over-reliance on substitute teachers, the districts will begin the school day utilizing a remote format. Remote learning will allow teachers and students to focus on student learning through both synchronous and asynchronous instruction. Students will attend school virtually in a structured manner, attending classes while following their regular schedules.

After beginning the school year with a three-week period (August 26 – September 11) of professional learning for faculty and staff that will address teaching, learning, and assessing using instructional technology, social-emotional learning, and creating an equitable and culturally sensitive environment, educators will welcome student virtually on September 14, 2020. The focus of the first days and weeks of school will be making connections, building relationships, and assessing where all students are after this past school year. The districts will implement a Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS) to address students' social, emotional, and academic needs. High-needs students, as identified through DESE's guidance, would begin in-person learning during the week of September 14<sup>th</sup>. It is the districts' goal to gradually phase in other groups of students into the hybrid model during the month of October if health and safety conditions warrant this approach.

Both school districts will remain committed to providing the best educational opportunities and experiences for all students in a safe, clean environment. The guidelines referenced in this plan are based on guidance from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE). This document will require modifications as new guidance and regulations emerge from the CDC and DESE.

# Letter from Superintendent

August 10, 2020

Dear Members of the Somerset and Somerset Berkley Communities,

I would like to take this opportunity to update you on our planning process for the start of a new school year in the Somerset Public Schools and Somerset Berkley Regional School District. The planning process continues to be guided by operational guidelines and restrictions from the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) and ongoing monitoring of public health data in Massachusetts and observing national trends. In Massachusetts, we have been encouraged that indicators about the virus were steadily improving until recently when we have started to see a slight increase in COVID-19 cases. The Commonwealth's careful and disciplined approach enabled our state to gradually begin reopening, in part because of strong compliance with health and safety precautions. Now, the state has taken a step backward with some reopening guidelines as we have seen how quickly the number of positive cases can increase when non-compliance occurs, as noted with several new hotspots in Massachusetts as well as in our neighboring state of Rhode Island. The question on all of our minds has been how and when do we apply those lessons learned to begin safely reopening our public schools?

DESE directed districts to submit a preliminary reopening plan by July 31 that addressed the feasibility of three options for serving students at the start of the school year. Those options included a full return to daily, in-person attendance, a hybrid plan combining in-school learning with some remote learning, and finally, a 100% remote learning program. The districts' final plan, which was approved by the Somerset Berkley Regional School Committee and the Somerset School Committee on August 6, will be submitted to DESE on August 10.

Under normal circumstances, students would be best served in schools every day, interacting with their peers and engaged in live classroom learning. Some students excelled in our remote model of learning this past spring while others were not as engaged and motivated for learning as normal. For most, remote learning is not an equal substitute for the daily in-person interactions with teachers and peers. When out of school, our students lack access to all of the academic, mental, and physical supports that help ensure their social-emotional well-being, particularly in navigating the effects of trauma during these tremendously challenging times. However, it is important to weigh these concerns with the overall health of our students and staff. In order to adhere to the school re-opening guidance provided by DESE, consistent with recommendations from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the American Pediatric Association, we cannot safely meet physical distancing requirements with all students and staff in the buildings at the same time.

We will resume student learning on September 14th through a phased-in remote-to-hybrid model of learning. This replicates the very effective manner in which the Commonwealth of Massachusetts has reopened businesses across the state: slowly, methodically, and strategically. **Students will begin school remotely** with the exception of high-needs special education students, who will experience some in-person learning. More details will be shared with families about what constitutes "high needs," which will be driven by DESE's [Primary Disability/Level of Need \(PL3\) form](#). Unlike the remote learning model from this past spring, remote learning this fall will replicate the school day (fixed schedules, start and end times, attendance, etc.) through both synchronous and asynchronous instruction.

In time, we will transition to a hybrid learning model by implementing changes in our school schedules and operating procedures to ensure that in-person learning is both safe and successful. This hybrid approach will require strategies to ensure the proper implementation and training for important health and safety protocols including, but not limited to, physical distancing, wearing face coverings, hand washing, cleaning and sanitizing facilities, regularly monitoring for symptoms of illness and staying home from school when sick. Our planning process includes a comprehensive set of strategies and investments to minimize the risk of transmitting the virus. The hybrid learning model will bring students back into school for in-person instruction in smaller, physically distanced groups on a rotating basis, combined with remote learning on the days students are not scheduled to be in school. If conditions allow the current plan to be implemented, several different grade levels would be re-introduced into school each week, allowing a methodical and intentional re-entry to school.

This phased-in approach provides an equitable experience for all students that will lead to our ultimate goal of full, in-person learning, returning students to school in a safe manner aligned with best practices and CDC guidelines. **Regardless of the in-person or hybrid models, any family may opt to have their child learn remotely this year.**

We recognize that the circumstances of every family and staff member are different and that this plan will not satisfy nor receive approval from everyone in our community. It will present tremendous challenges to families and be burdensome for many as it relates to childcare. We must remain guided by the scientific and medical research to keep our students and staff safe and healthy, and that we will be prepared to make adjustments along the way as the public health conditions or other variables change over time. Returning students to school on September 14<sup>th</sup> through in-person or hybrid learning models would present countless operational challenges, including transportation, food service, and having an insufficient number of teachers for our classes, thus significantly reducing our attention on student learning. Starting remotely will allow student learning to be the focus of what we do beginning on September 14th.

Given the significant changes this plan requires in the way our schools operate, we will negotiate this plan with all impacted employee unions. We will inform you of our progress in developing aspects of this plan once the details have been determined and agreed upon. The contents of this document will continue to change as new information is learned, guidance and regulations received, and more plans completed. We will post updates on our website, through social media, and through One Call Now. I am confident that we can prioritize both safety and learning as we prepare for the start of a successful school year. Thank you for your patience and cooperation in these extremely difficult and uncertain times.

Sincerely,

Jeffrey Schoonover

Superintendent of Schools

## **Disclaimer**

This plan for the reopening of schools for the Somerset Public Schools and Somerset Berkley Regional School District is subject to change due to the constantly evolving nature of what we know about the COVID-19 virus. Modifications will be needed as the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education announces new guidance to school districts. Changes may also be warranted as some aspects of this reopening plan must be negotiated between the Somerset School Committee, Somerset Berkley Regional School Committee, the Somerset Teachers' Association (STA), and the American Federation of State, Council, and Municipal Employees (AFSCME) bargaining units.

# Introduction

## Initial Fall School Reopening Guidance (June 25, 2020)

On Thursday, June 25, 2020, the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) released its [Initial Fall School Reopening Guidance](#). This guidance was heavily influenced by the medical and scientific research community, including infectious disease physicians, pediatricians and public health experts from the Massachusetts General Brigham Health System and the Massachusetts chapter of American Academy of Pediatrics and reviews of guidelines from the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) and World Health Organization (WHO), as well as other sources.

This initial guidance from DESE identified recommendations and requirements for the safe return of as many students as possible to in-person learning. Among these are:

- Face coverings are required for all adults and for students in grades 2-12;
- The ideal physical distance between students remains at 6 feet with a minimum physical distance of 3 feet;
- Schools should utilize and repurpose other spaces wherever possible, such as the cafeteria, auditorium, library, etc.;
- Screening is not required;
- Reducing the mixing of students through the use of student cohorts;
- Three plans for full in-person learning, full remote learning, and hybrid in-person/remote learning; including an option in each of full remote learning for any student.

## Three Possibilities on the Continuum of Learning

Each school district is required to create a plan for the three different models of learning, as noted above.

1. ***In-person learning with new safety requirements:*** In this model, all students return in person to school settings that are appropriately modified to accommodate the health and safety requirements outlined above. Examples of modifications could include altered classroom configurations, setting up additional learning spaces, and schedule changes.
2. ***Hybrid learning:*** A hybrid model means that students would alternate between in-person and remote learning. For instance, students could switch between in-person and remote learning on alternating weeks or days of the week. This model is necessary in the event that a school or school district is unable to bring all students back to school under the health and safety requirements despite their best efforts, or in case of COVID-19 related circumstances.
3. ***Remote learning:*** This model must be available for individual students who cannot yet return in-person, and for all students in the event of future classroom or school closures due to COVID-19.

**Plan for special populations:** Finally, across each of these models, all districts and schools need a plan for how special populations, including students with disabilities and English learners, will receive necessary services and accommodations.

Due to the uncertain nature of the upcoming school year and the potential resurgence of COVID-19, school districts must be prepared to quickly adapt from and transitions to one of these three instructional models to another.

# Health and Safety

## About COVID-19<sup>1</sup>

COVID-19 is the disease caused by the SARS-CoV-2 coronavirus. Some people who become infected become seriously ill, others experience mild symptoms, and others never show symptoms. Symptoms can include fever, cough, shortness of breath, fatigue, a stuffy or runny nose, diarrhea, and headache. The median time between infection and the appearance of symptoms is about 5 days (Lauer et al. 2020), although the incubation period in children may be longer (Zhu et al. 2020). In general, COVID-19 appears to be less severe among younger kids than among adults and teenagers, though children who have chronic diseases or conditions, such as pre-existing respiratory conditions, may be at a [higher risk](#) for severe COVID-19 requiring hospitalization. Also, there have been cases of children developing a rare but serious condition called multisystem inflammatory syndrome as a result of COVID-19. So while children represent a relatively small percentage of global COVID-19 cases to date and generally have milder symptoms, the potential for negative health outcomes for children cannot be dismissed.

## How is the virus that causes COVID-19 transmitted?

There are three ways the virus that causes COVID-19 can be transmitted, both by people who are symptomatic as well as those without symptoms: close contact transmission, long-range transmission, and transmission from contaminated surfaces (details below). Of note, the current understanding of COVID-19 suggests that younger kids are less likely to transmit the virus to other kids and adults ([Wilson 2020](#); [Boast et al. 2020](#); [Boulad et al. 2020](#); [Li et al. 2020](#); [Lee and Raszka 2020](#); [Munro and Faust 2020](#); [Ludvigsson 2020b](#); [Ludvigsson 2020a](#)). It is important to remember that available studies on children's transmission have come predominantly from places that have controlled the community spread of the virus better than the United States ([Wilson 2020](#)). It is not fully clear how the results of studies on COVID-19 transmission by and among children who are not engaged in normal activities such as in-person schooling will generalize to contexts in which children have returned to their normal in-person activities. Older children may have the same infection transmission to others as adults ([Park et al. 2020](#)) but the evidence is only emerging regarding the age-related factors that may contribute to transmission.

## Close-contact transmission

When infectious people exhale, speak, cough, sneeze, or sing, they produce large virus-laden droplets that can land in another person's mouth, nose, or eyes, as well as smaller virus-laden aerosols that can be inhaled directly into another person's respiratory tract. Droplet and aerosol transmission can be minimized by physical distancing (6 feet apart whenever possible), wearing face masks, and staying home when feeling sick. There is [definitive evidence](#) that wearing a mask reduces spread of COVID-19 and it should be made a part of return to school culture.

In school settings, close contacts include other students and staff who were within 6 feet of the student or staff for at least 10-15 minutes in a classroom, in other school spaces, on the bus, or at an extracurricular activity. Students who are in self-contained classrooms for an extended period and all students/staff within student cohorts are considered close contacts as they may have been within 6 feet of the person with a positive test result.

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<sup>1</sup> Parabola Project School Reopening Readiness Guide  
[https://docs.google.com/document/d/1ktN9itnK9KjaSXihT97DQYOh7b\\_NQOPJV3NiiKHkKQw/edit#heading=h.vfoo8wlor skj](https://docs.google.com/document/d/1ktN9itnK9KjaSXihT97DQYOh7b_NQOPJV3NiiKHkKQw/edit#heading=h.vfoo8wlor skj)



## Long-range transmission

Aerosols that are produced when an infected person exhales, speaks, sneezes, or coughs and that contain the COVID-19 virus can also stay aloft and travel in the airflow around a room ([World Health Organization 2020](#)). This airborne virus can remain suspended in the air indoors for more than an hour and infect people who were not physically close to the sick person. In addition to physical distancing, wearing masks, and staying home when sick, long-range transmission can be reduced by increasing outdoor air ventilation, which dilutes the concentration of airborne virus, or filtering air recirculating in a room or building, in addition to physical distancing, wearing masks, and staying home when sick.

## Touching a contaminated surface and then touching your face

Surfaces like desks, tables, playground equipment, or water fountains can be contaminated if an infected person coughs or sneezes directly on them or into their hands and then touches the surface before washing or sanitizing his or her hands. Others may then touch the surface and touch their nose, mouth, or eyes without washing or sanitizing their hands first. The virus can last on different surfaces for varying amounts of time, though risk of transmission reduces with time. Transmission by contaminated surfaces can be reduced through frequent cleaning and disinfection of commonly-touched objects, through use of automatic or touchless alternatives (e.g., automatic doors), and through frequent hand-washing.

## What factors determine COVID-19 risk?

Personal risk for COVID-19 infection depends on how susceptible a person is based on age, gender, immune status, pre-existing conditions, and genetics. But risk can also be affected by factors outside of the individual — the number of cases in the community, housing and work environments, the local health care system's capacity, and how well available treatments work. Another important factor to consider is a person's tolerance for risk. Some are willing to take on more risk, while others try to avoid risk as much as possible. The current understanding of COVID-19 suggests that children are less likely to contract the virus. Children (particularly school-age children below the age of 12) appear to be at lower risk of severe COVID-19 than adults and older teenagers.

## COVID-19 Symptoms

The following is a list of symptoms related to COVID-19 that should be monitored by employees, and by the families and caregivers of students:

- Fever (100.4° Fahrenheit or higher), chills, or shaking chills
- Cough (not due to other known cause, such as chronic cough)
- Difficulty breathing or shortness of breath
- New loss of taste or smell
- Sore throat
- Headache when in combination with other symptoms
- Muscle aches or body aches
- Nausea, vomiting, or diarrhea
- Fatigue, when in combination with other symptoms
- Nasal congestion or runny nose (not due to other known causes, such as allergies) when in combination with other symptoms

## Health and Safety Protocols and Best Practices

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has recommended specific strategies to mitigate the spread of COVID-19 transmission and infection. Healthy hygiene practices are an

essential element to protect students and staff against COVID-19 and other illnesses. These best practices for mitigating the transmission of COVID-19 and other viruses include proper handwashing/hand-sanitizing, wearing face coverings and other Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) as appropriate, maintaining effective cleaning and disinfecting measures, and adopting best physical/social distancing practices. It is not one mitigation practice but an implementation of all these strategies that substantially reduces the risk of transmission.

## **Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) Preparedness**

Personal protective equipment, including face masks, face shields, gloves, and gowns will be provided, as appropriate. The Somerset Public Schools (SPS) and Somerset Berkley Regional School District (SBRSD) will have a three-month supply of these materials to begin the 2020-2021 school year.

SPS and SBRSD will provide PPE, consistent with DESE recommendations. Building principals and school nurses shall identify a schedule each week to distribute and or resupply PPE to faculty and staff. The following PPE will be provided:

- Disposable masks for staff;
- Disposable gowns and shields for faculty and staff working in certain high-needs environments;
- A disposable mask weekly for students to supplement their family-provided mask; and
- A waste receptacle for the disposal of PPE in each classroom and office.

Building principals will also create procedures for faculty and staff to obtain PPE during the week should additional supplies be needed.

## **School Safety Protocols**

### **Physical Distancing**

Faculty and staff will employ physical distancing strategies to increase spacing between individuals, including adjusted seating arrangements on school buses, in classrooms, and when eating meals in classrooms, the cafeteria, or other spaces in schools. Additionally, staff will use strategies to minimize mixing between groups including the implementation of student cohorts in grades preschool through grade eight, identifying traffic patterns through the school, and limiting transitions between classes through changes in schools' master schedules.

Physical distancing impacts classroom configuration, instructional practices, scheduling, lunch and general school operations. Student assemblies, field trips and other school events that require larger in-person gatherings will be eliminated or managed to reflect all physical distancing requirements and state regulations. Physical distancing requirements will be maintained outside, including during recess and physical education. The use of playground equipment and sharing of playground equipment may be restricted. Staff and students must refrain from physical contact, including, but not limited to, handshakes, high fives, etc. Hallway and stairway traffic patterns will be identified for students and staff with floor markings and/or signs. These markings and signs will provide guidance to students and staff of the flow and direction of one-way traffic and to identify social distancing intervals of six feet when standing in a line.

### **Masks/Face Coverings**

The DESE initial guidance indicates that "the primary route of transmission for COVID-19 is respiratory, masks or face coverings are among the most critical components of risk reduction. Masks/face coverings protect the general public against COVID-19 infection, with a recent

retrospective study estimating near 80% effectiveness in reducing COVID-19 transmission, especially when worn prior to symptom onset.”

Masks/face coverings will be mandatory for all staff and for all students in grade two and above. While not required, students in kindergarten and grade one are strongly encouraged to wear a mask/face covering.

Exceptions to mask/face covering requirements will be made and reasonable accommodations provided for those whom it is not possible due to medical conditions, disability, or other health or safety factors. The parent/guardian of a student for whom wearing a mask is medically inadvisable must provide a physician’s note identifying the specific medical reason the student is unable to wear a mask/face covering. In these situations, the alternative to a face mask will be a face shield that wraps around the sides of the face and extends to below the chin.

Masks/face coverings will be provided by the student/family, but schools will have a backup supply of masks on hand for students who do not have them, or if their masks become otherwise unusable during the school day. Reusable masks/face coverings provided by families should be washed by families daily. Families experiencing financial hardship and who are unable to afford masks/face coverings will be provided with masks by the school.

Additional information about masks/face coverings include:

- Masks/face coverings are not required outside as long as proper social distance of at least six feet is maintained or at least ten feet when participating in physical education class.
- Language or images on masks/face coverings may not interfere with the educational environment and therefore should not be offensive, provocative, or disruptive to instruction.
- Masks/face coverings are required to be worn by everyone on the bus during school bus transportation, including students in kindergarten and grade one.
- Staff and students will be educated on the wearing and use of masks/face coverings including using signage from the Centers for Disease Control. The CDC [Use of Face Coverings](#) provides helpful explanations about the use and care of face coverings.

Each school will provide opportunities for at least two mask breaks during the day utilizing outdoor areas and larger indoor spaces where students will be at least six feet apart. Students will be shown how to properly put on, take off, and store their masks when not being worn

## Handwashing and Hand Sanitizing

A practice of handwashing at intervals throughout the day will be a mandatory occurrence. Handwashing removes pathogens from the surface of the hands. While handwashing with soap and water is the best option, alcohol-based hand sanitizer (at least 60 percent ethanol or at least 70 percent isopropyl) may be utilized when handwashing is not available. In any classroom where a sink and soap dispenser are not located, hand sanitizer stations will be installed as well as in other locations throughout each school building.

DESE’s initial requirements and related guidance are as follows:

- Students and staff are required to exercise hand hygiene (handwashing or sanitizing) upon arrival to school, before eating, before putting on and taking off masks, and before dismissal.
- Handwashing: When handwashing, individuals should use soap and water to wash all surfaces of their hands for at least 20 seconds, wait for visible lather, rinse thoroughly, and dry with an individual disposable towel.

- Hand sanitizing: If handwashing is not feasible, hand sanitizer with at least 60 percent ethanol or at least 70 percent isopropyl content can be used. Hand sanitizer should be applied to all surfaces of the hands and in sufficient quantity that it takes 20 seconds of rubbing hands together for the sanitizer to dry.

## Student and Staff Attendance Guidelines

Employees should monitor themselves and families should monitor students at home each morning for the most common symptoms of COVID-19 (see list [above](#)). If there are no symptoms present, the student or employee should go to school.

If any symptoms are present, families do not send the student to school and the employee does not go to work. The following steps need to be taken:

1. Call the school's COVID-19 point of contact and inform them that the individual is staying home due to symptoms.
2. Current Massachusetts DPH guidance is that all symptomatic individuals in Massachusetts, even those with mild symptoms, should be tested. An individual who does not wish to be tested should instead isolate for 14 days and until asymptomatic.
3. The student should get tested at one of Massachusetts's test sites, which may require pre-screening, a referral, and/or an appointment.
4. Isolate at home until test results are returned.
5. Proceed as follows according to test results:
  - a. IF NEGATIVE: Student/Employee stays home until asymptomatic for 24 hours.
  - b. IF POSITIVE: Student/Employee should remain at home (except to get medical care), monitor their symptoms, notify the school, notify personal close contacts, assist the school in contact tracing efforts, and answer the call from the local board of health or Massachusetts Community Tracing Collaborative. Most people who have relatively mild illness will need to stay in self-isolation for at least 10 days and until at least 24 hours have passed with no fever and improvement in other symptoms.

Schools and districts will be required to take daily attendance whether a student is attending in-person or remotely, per 603 CMR 27.08(3)(b). SPS and SBRSD will create and communicate the method that schools will employ to track attendance when learning remotely. These methods may include identifying when students are present in synchronous sessions, submitting assignments online, tracking students' login and participation through online learning platforms, and attending virtual check-ins. SPS and SBRSD know that many families will have family circumstances that create barriers to consistent student attendance. The school districts intend to work with and support families in these situations to alleviate these challenges in order to have students attend school, which increases students' chances for future academic success.

## Visitor Restrictions

SPS and SBRSD will limit normal visitation to our schools during the school year, restricting visitors and volunteers. Exceptions will be allowed for contracted service providers for the purpose of special education, required support services, or other purposes as authorized by the school or district. Only employees of the school districts and authorized visitors will be allowed in schools during the summer months as we prepare for the reopening of school. All individuals entering the building will be required to wear face coverings and maintain proper physical distancing. All efforts will be made to conduct meetings with families virtually rather than in-person. A log of all visitors will be kept in each school's main office and maintained for the entire school year, with the date, contact phone number, arrival/departure times, and areas visited within the building for each visit.

## **Medical Isolation Room**

The medical isolation room is a separate space from the nurse's office. The medical isolation room will be used when a student presenting COVID-19 symptoms needs to be separated from others while waiting to be picked up from school. Masks will be strictly required for all students and staff in this space, including students in preschool, kindergarten, and first grade. Everyone in this space, including the adult supervisor, must always maintain at least six feet of physical distance. The adult supervisor will be provided with a face shield in addition to wearing a mask. If a student is unable to wear a mask for medical reasons, either no other students will be allowed in this room or the student will be placed in another location. Everyone entering and leaving the medical isolation room will be required to wash or sanitize their hands as well as signing in and out for tracing purposes. No eating or drinking will be allowed in this room as that would require the removal of the face mask. Rather, if a student must eat or drink prior to being picked up, that student would have to be supervised outdoors. This space will be sanitized several times during the day as needed. Each building principal will identify the medical isolation room in his/her school building.

# Operations

## Cleaning and Sanitizing

School building custodians will clean schools daily in accordance with CDC, state, and local public health guidance to limit the potential spread of COVID-19 via the transmission of the virus through contaminated inanimate objects. SPS and SBRSD will implement strategic cleaning and sanitizing procedures, focusing first on high-touch and high-traffic areas.

High Touch Areas include:

- Classroom and hallway doors, including handles, knobs, push bars/plates, locks, glass and wood surfaces
- Classroom sinks, faucet handles, and countertops
- Classroom tables, desks, and chairs
- Restroom doors, sinks, faucet handles, and flush handles
- Toilet paper, soap, and paper towel dispensers and handles
- Railings/handrails
- Light switches
- Elevator push buttons
- ADA Bars
- Computer keyboards and touch screens

High Traffic Areas include:

- School Main Offices
- Entrance and exit to building
- Restrooms
- Stairwells
- Communal gathering areas such as the auditorium, cafeteria, playground, or gym

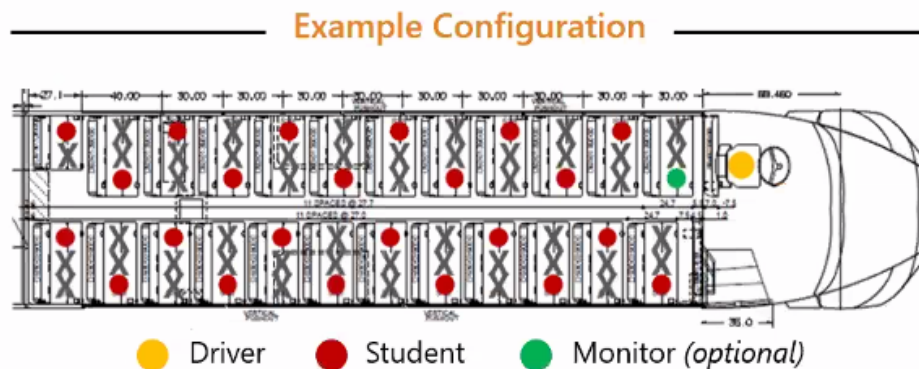
In addition to the regular daily cleaning procedures, which includes sweeping and mopping floors, vacuuming carpets, emptying trash, and cleaning restrooms and classrooms, school building custodians will attend to the special cleaning procedures related to the lists above. Each school will undergo at least two deep cleanings each week, between Tuesday afternoon and Thursday morning and between Friday afternoon and Monday morning. Daily and weekly checklists and logs will be maintained and verified each morning by the head custodian after the daily inspection.

Each classroom will be supplied with an EPA-approved pre-mixed disinfectant spray and paper towels to address immediate cleaning needs.

## Transportation

DESE released its [reopening transportation guidance](#) to school districts on July 22, 2020. Highlights of this guidance include:

- **Masks:** Everyone on the bus, including students, the driver, and other staff, and everyone waiting at bus stops must wear masks that cover the nose and mouth at all times. This applies to students in kindergarten and grade one. Face shields may be an option for students with medical, behavioral, or other challenges who are unable to wear masks. Masks should be provided by the student/family, but the SPS and SBRSD will have disposable masks available on all buses for students who need them.
- **Distance:** Students will be seated *no more than* one student per bench, alternating sides for each row as depicted below, which will allow students to maintain approximately 3 feet of physical distance. Exceptions will be made for children from the same household who may sit together and in closer proximity (e.g., two students per bench). Due to these physical distancing requirements, school buses will have a maximum occupancy of approximately 23-25 students, depending on the size of the bus.
- **Ventilation:** Bus windows will be kept open at all times during operation for increased ventilation, unless not possible due to extreme weather conditions.
- **Seat assignments:** Students will be assigned to a single bus and a particular seat.



SPS and SBRSD will work closely with Fisher Bus Company, which provides regular and special transportation to students in Somerset and Somerset Berkley in addition to district-owned vehicles that provide special transportation, too. Tracing protocols and cleaning procedures for all school buses and school vans will be established.

## Food Service

Schools will continue to provide meal service to students. The meal service program will be a combination of in-school serving and a “grab & go” program similar to the one that was implemented during this past spring. All state and federal health and safety guidelines will be employed by food service workers, including wearing the proper PPE. All meals will be individually plated. The type of learning model (in-person, hybrid, remote) will determine whether in-school or “grab & go” services will occur.

Given the physical distancing guidelines and restrictions when masks/face coverings are removed, the seating capacity in each school cafeteria will be greatly diminished. This may result in students eating lunch in classrooms or in other locations rather than in the cafeteria.

# Student Learning Supports

## Special Education and High Needs Populations

It is critical to the success of our most vulnerable students, including those with disabilities and English Learners, that special education faculty and staff collaborate and communicate often with general educators and families to ensure that all in-person and remote learning activities are appropriate and accessible. Special education faculty and staff, including classroom special educators, paraprofessionals, related service providers, and counselors, will continue to create effective partnerships and teams while keeping open the lines of communication between all parties.

SPS and SBRSD have several self-contained and/or high need special education programs at all levels. Using the [Primary Disability/Level of Need PL-3 IEP Form](#), our special education substantially-separate or public day students who are linked to one of these programs within the grade levels of our school community will be identified as high needs. These programs support most of our high need students through more intensive programming, integrated emotional and behavioral supports, and related service supports. When implementing either a hybrid or remote learning model, in order to maximize the in-person instruction and services for our high needs student population, these students would receive in-person instruction four days each week (Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, and Friday) with a remote learning day on Wednesday.

Department urges schools and districts to prioritize in--person instruction for two particular groups of students with disabilities: preschool-aged students, and students with significant and complex needs. Remote learning is often more challenging for these students.

For the purposes of this document, students with complex and significant needs include:

- Students already identified as "high needs" through the IEP process on the IEP form entitled "Primary Disability/Level of Need-PL3." Such students must meet at least two of these criteria:
  - Services provided outside of the general education classroom;
  - Service providers are special education teachers and related service providers;
  - Special education services constitute more than 75% of the student's school day;
- Students who cannot engage in remote learning due to their disability-related needs;
- Students who primarily use aided and augmentative communication;
- Students who are homeless
- Students in foster care or congregate care; and/or
- Students dually identified as English Learners.

It is important for our most vulnerable students to maintain a consistent schedule with structured routines, instruction, and related service supports. These programs are typically self-contained classes with access to the general education setting for varied inclusion opportunities where the student can be successful. In an in-person or hybrid learning model, at this time, inclusion opportunities would be limited to one cohort of students rather than multiple cohorts for health and safety concerns. Academic and related activities will be provided within the program with related services such as speech and language, occupational therapy, and physical therapy provided as a "push-in" service. These services may also be provided in a private section of the classroom to limit student exposure to various parts of the school building and exposure to other cohorts of students. Case by case variations to the four days of attendance to these programs will be made according to individual student and family needs that may allow the hybrid model to be a preferred model.



SPS and SBRSD supports students with disabilities in the inclusion setting and will continue to do so in the hybrid learning model. As described above, students will be assigned to a cohort of students and attend school on set days, Students will be supported in their inclusive classroom by their special education teacher and receive their “B” and “C” grid supports as described in their IEPs, both during their on-site days and through remote tele-lessons and supports.

Other high need students, such as English learners and those who are homeless, in foster care, or economically challenged, will be supported through intensive case management and social-emotional support as needed. Each special education teacher, related service provider, and school adjustment counselor or school psychologist will be assigned a caseload of students/families with whom they are responsible to engage in ongoing communication. During the remote learning in the spring, this was integral in supporting families and engaging students. This case management can assist parents with access to remote learning platforms, identifying community resources as needed, and supporting overall student mental health and well-being.

## Social-Emotional Learning (SEL)

The COVID-19 pandemic, which began affecting students in Somerset and Somerset Berkley Regional High School on March 13, 2020, has impacted students and staff in several ways such as social isolation and increased anxiety while not physically being in school. SPS and SBRSD will enhance the curriculum and provide support focused on social and emotional learning, relationship-building, and successful transitions back to school, regardless of the model of learning that is implemented (in-person, hybrid, or remote). Schools can facilitate the social and emotional health of children through lessons that develop students’ skills to recognize and manage emotions, set and achieve positive goals, appreciate others’ perspectives, establish and maintain positive relationships, and make responsible decisions<sup>2</sup>.

Professional learning on social-emotional learning and mental health supports will be provided to faculty and staff prior to the students’ return to school. Specific strategies may include the following, depending on the student’s grade level:

- Morning meetings or check-ins;
- movement breaks and mask breaks;
- Zones of regulation;
- Intervention blocks and other periods used to provide instruction in social and emotional learning;
- Counseling staff and school psychologists will provide a variety of student supports, such as group or individual counseling and consultation; behavioral interventions and plans; and resources for parents and teachers to access to address students’ social and emotional needs.

Feedback from students will be solicited through surveys to guide the development of SEL supports tailored to their specific needs related to COVID-19.

## Identifying and Responding to Learning Gaps

Each school will collect data using baseline assessments to identify individual and collective learning gaps. Schools will provide a multi-tiered system of supports (MTSS) through classroom teachers, specialist and resource teachers, and support staff whether the mode of instruction is in-person or remote. When done remotely, these supports will be delivered both synchronously and asynchronously. This multi-tiered support system will focus on the [elementary](#) and [secondary](#) essential learning standards through whole-group and small-group instruction (Tier 1) and individual student interventions (Tiers 2 and 3).

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<sup>2</sup> Parabola Project School Re-opening Readiness Guide DRAFT July 2020

## Feedback, Assessment, and Grading

Feedback to students comes in a variety of forms) and has a variety of purposes. Feedback that helps inform instruction and addresses learners' needs is most useful. Effective feedback also informs students and families how they are progressing and what adjustments are necessary.

Student assignments will be submitted mostly through Google Classroom. Teachers will provide feedback to students in a variety of ways, including one-on-one video conferencing, annotated feedback using a PDF annotation tool, and comments provided to students using Google Suite applications.

Students and families should expect more consistency and continuity across grade levels and schools, such as timeliness of feedback and grades and the manner in which feedback is given. Grades will be posted online through the use of Google Classroom and/or Aspen for all student. A grade tracking and reporting tool for elementary teachers will be communicated at a later date.

# Technology

SPS and SBRSD have invested heavily in instructional technology over recent years with the goal of providing all students in grades kindergarten through grade twelve with equitable access to technology, including individually assigned Chromebooks for use in school and in grades 6-12 at home. In 2020-2021, all students will be assigned a Chromebook for use at home to support the remote and hybrid models of teaching and learning. The districts will communicate to families in late August or early September how these devices will be deployed to students.

In an effort to ensure students have adequate access to the Internet from home, the districts will work with families to provide students with reliable Internet access. The districts will also work to streamline the number of applications and learning platforms that teachers use with their students. During the spring remote learning, we learned that it was a challenge for parents and caregivers to assist students to navigate between different systems. The districts will provide several teaching and learning applications to all teachers to alleviate these learning obstacles from home while providing a more consistent and improved delivery of instruction.

Somerset and Somerset Berkley Regional teachers will have access to the Google suite of collaboration and communication tools, including Google Classroom. These tools allow students to demonstrate their learning; to acquire, practice, and apply new skills; and to communicate and collaborate with teachers and peers, thus creating and maintaining a sense of community. These digital tools, along with others, will allow for both synchronous and asynchronous learning through video conferencing and screen casting, respectively. Training will be provided for the instructional technology tools during the first phase of the school year, the period of targeted professional learning from August 26 through September 11.

Just as the schools and districts did during the spring remote learning period, we will continue to provide students and families with a list of vetted, effective online teaching and learning resources. Schools will also create online content for students and families to help learn, understand, and navigate these core instructional technology tools.

# Professional Learning

## Faculty and Staff Needs

Faculty professional development will be offered at the beginning of the school year and on an ongoing basis during the 2020-2021 school year. Professional learning will include the following topics:

- Health and safety protocols;
- Teaching and assessing in a remote learning environment;
- Social and emotional learning strategies and best practices;
- Equitable and Culturally Diverse Teaching

## Student and Family Needs

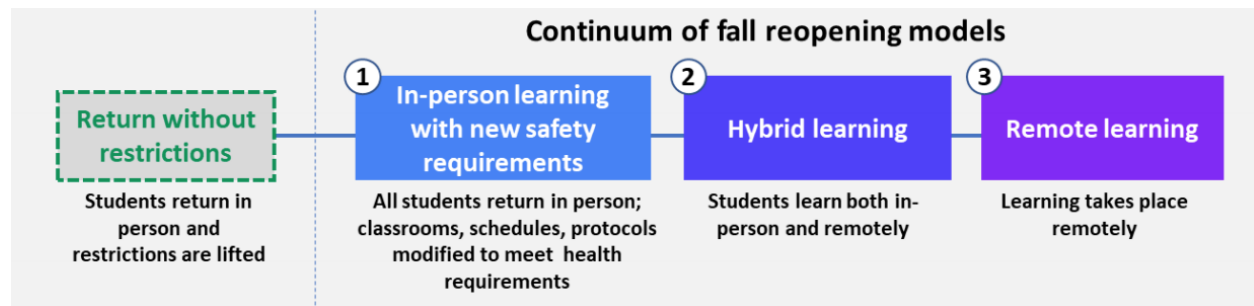
The districts will be providing necessary training and help sessions to students and families to ensure a successful start to the school year. Details about trainings, ongoing tech support, and other technology-related resources will be communicated with families in early September, prior to students' return to learning.

# Teaching and Learning in 2020-2021

DESE required the following components of each district's reopening plan:

Each district and school will need to plan for three possibilities on the continuum of reopening, as depicted below:

- 1) in-person learning with new safety requirements;
- 2) a hybrid of in-person and remote learning; and
- 3) remote learning.



The Director of Curriculum and Assessment, in collaboration with principals and content coordinators, will review and modify the existing curriculum as needed to ensure an equitable and robust learning experience. We will focus first on students' social-emotional needs, identify achievement gaps, and address the essential learnings standards and skills in each course and grade level. Regardless of the model of learning, all lessons and activities will be aligned with state standards. Detailed information about course content and grade level standards will be shared by teachers in early September.

## Model One: In-Person Learning with new safety requirements

The goal of this model is to get as many students as possible back into schools for in-person learning—safely. In this model, all students return in person to school settings that are appropriately modified to accommodate the health and safety requirements. Examples of modifications could include altered classroom configurations, setting up additional learning spaces, and schedule changes, including start and end times to the school day. In Somerset and Somerset Berkley, students could return to in-person learning if student separations of three feet are implemented in classrooms. This model most closely resembles the regular school day to which everyone is accustomed.

In-person learning is the ideal model and ultimate goal for the 2020-2021 school year. This model allows for full-time learning while students are physically attending school, with the exception of those students who opt to remain learning in a remote manner. This is the model that teachers, students, and families know well, thus requiring the minimal amount of training for which to prepare. Student academic and social-emotional learning gaps are best addressed through the direct services that are provided by this model of learning.

However, in-person learning also has significant flaws at this time. The three-foot spacing between student desks that is necessary for this model is not the distance recommended by the CDC for social distancing, which would pose the greatest health risk for students and staff. Moreover, significant operational impediments would exist with in-person learning, including transportation and food service. School bus capacities would be reduced to less than half of typical capacities, creating significant challenges when all students attend school. Similarly,

reduced seating capacities in school cafeterias and required six-foot spacing between students if eating in a classroom (with three-foot separations occurring in every classroom) would result in significant accommodations. The master schedule would require changes and the limitations and restrictions placed on physical education and music would likely result in the removal of some of these courses from the programs of studies.

In-person learning would also require significant additional expenses, namely with staffing needs. Early morning monitors to supervise students before school, to monitor bathrooms throughout the day, and to maintain the high degree of cleanliness and sanitization. Furthermore, the likelihood of many positive or presumptive cases of COVID-19 will force staff and students to self-quarantine, resulting in frequent disruptions to learning and an over-reliance on substitute teachers, who are already in short supply.

## Model Two: Hybrid Learning

This model is intended when schools are unable to bring all students back to school under the health and safety requirements or in case of COVID-19 related circumstances. A hybrid model means that students would alternate between in-person and remote learning. In this model, students would be placed into one of four cohorts of students. One cohort would attend school in-person on Monday and Tuesday then learn remotely Wednesday, Thursday and Friday. The other cohort of students would learn remotely Monday through Wednesday and learn in-person on Thursday and Friday. The high-needs cohort of students, as defined earlier, would attend each day but Wednesday. The fourth cohort includes those students who cannot or choose not to attend school in-person. Students in this cohort will attend school remotely five days per week.

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Cohort A	In-Person	In-Person	Remote	Remote	Remote
Cohort B	Remote	Remote	Remote	In-Person	In-Person
Cohort C (High Needs)	In-Person	In-Person	Remote	In-Person	In-Person
Cohort D (Full Remote)	Remote	Remote	Remote	Remote	Remote

With this hybrid model, emphasis would be placed on:

- Maintaining social distancing at six-feet separation, as recommended by the CDC;
- Addressing family and teacher concerns regarding the efficacy of remote teaching and learning from feedback collected through several surveys submitted during the spring and summer months as well as through student, staff, and family forums;
- Providing students with several days of direct instruction each week as safely as possible;
- Meeting the learning needs of the variety of learners in our schools.

In order to have the most effective and engaging instruction taking place, schools would use the Gradual Release of Responsibility Instructional Framework<sup>3</sup> utilizing focus lessons, guided instruction, productive group work, and independent learning between the in-person and remote learning days.

Just as with the in-person model, hybrid learning would result in the part-time, physical return of students to school. This model of learning could be accomplished by implementing a six-foot spacing between students, which is the ideal separation indicated by the CDC and DESE. Student academic and social-emotional learning gaps would be addressed through direct services in a hybrid model.

The hybrid learning model, similar to in-person learning due to the physical return of students to school, also has operational challenges given the guidance, regulations, and restrictions at this time. Operational impediments would exist with hybrid learning, too, including regular and special education transportation and food service. The master schedule for this model would also require changes to make this work. One of the biggest flaws of this model is the disruption to the family schedule due to the inconsistent nature of in-person learning.

Hybrid learning would require additional expenses, namely with staffing needs. Early morning monitors to supervise students before school, to monitor bathrooms throughout the day, and to maintain the high degree of cleanliness and sanitization. Furthermore, the likelihood of many positive or presumptive cases of COVID-19 will force staff and students to self-quarantine, resulting in frequent disruptions to learning and an over-reliance on substitute teachers, who are already in short supply. Shifting to a blend of in-person and remote learning would require additional resources, professional development, and time to implement effectively.

## Model Three: Remote Learning

This model is available for individual students who cannot or choose not to return in-person, for all students in the event of required future classroom or school closures due to COVID-19, and if learning in-person poses significant health risks to students and staff. Remote learning would include both direct instructional time with teachers and time for students to work independently. The remote learning model offers the ability to continue student learning no matter the contingency.

Remote learning takes place when students, educators, and support staff are joined across time and distance to learn rather than meet in a traditional classroom setting. Remote learning includes, but is not limited to, learning opportunities such as:

- Video-based lessons
- Audio-based demonstrations/read-alouds
- Interactive projects
- Large and small group video/audio conference calls
- 1:1 video/audio calls
- Independent assignments
- Online/video class discussions

The goal of remote learning is to maintain connections with all students, engage students in the curriculum, and provide students with opportunities to engage in innovative problem-solving;

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<sup>3</sup> Fisher, D., & Frey, N. (2008). Better learning through structured teaching: A framework for the gradual release of responsibility. Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development

develop effective communication skills, use technology responsibly; and become positive contributors to society, thus achieving their full potential in a rigorous, relevant, and safe learning environment.

For remote learning to be effective both synchronous and asynchronous instruction are required. Students and families expressed concerns from their spring remote learning experiences and have demanded more structure and accountability for the schools and students alike. Remote teaching and learning expectations will be developed and agreed upon by the Somerset Teachers' Association and the school districts, including administrators and the Somerset and Somerset Berkley Regional School Committees. Certain technological needs are required to ensure success of this model:

- The school will provide Chromebooks to all students in grades K-12 to ensure equitable access for all students to remote learning platforms;
- Additional professional learning will be offered to staff on technology tools and to continue to expand their technology capabilities;
- Additional support will be provided in the form of workshops to help acclimate families and students to learning platforms and digital tools.

#### Synchronous Instruction

- Two-way, real-time, virtual instruction between teachers and students;
- At each level (Elementary, Middle School, and High School), daily live direct instructional minutes would be defined with the goal of increasing live direct instruction that was provided in the spring;
- In addition to whole group instruction, small group and 1:1 sessions would be provided to continue to offer differentiation and specialized instruction to both high need and special education students;
- Attendance will be taken and monitored daily;
- Feedback, assessing, and grade reporting would be consistent with those used at each level prior to COVID-19 for all assessments and assignments.

#### Asynchronous Instruction

- Asynchronous Instruction is defined as not live or in person; pre-recorded lessons; students complete work on their own; self-guided using tech devices. Developmental level and needs would be considered at all three grade levels (Elementary, Middle, High) to define what asynchronous instruction looks like.
- One platform will be used at each level to help minimize multiple locations and as a response to parent feedback that was provided about their experiences in the Spring.
- Assignments are turned in and the feedback, assessing, and grade reporting are similar to that of synchronous teaching and learning;
- Teachers will address the same required curriculum as presented in live classrooms.

The remote learning model is the safest model possible from a medical and scientific perspective. The greatest strength of remote learning is that it would allow all students to return to and focus on learning, rather than the frequent distractions that will inevitably occur daily as a result of students displaying symptoms of COVID-19, such as coughing. Lastly, during the spring remote learning period, some students, such as those with school phobia and anxiety, experienced much success with this model.

Whereas some students excelled and flourished during remote learning this past spring, other students were not as successful compared to in-person learning. Even though remote learning



provides a more consistent schedule for families than hybrid learning, it does present many families with childcare needs or providing support for their child(ren) with technology or learning issues. Similar to hybrid learning, any shift to a blend of in-person and remote learning would require additional resources, professional learning, and time to implement effectively.

In a remote learning environment, student attendance would be tracked through Aspen and would be determined based on presence in virtual meetings, participation in class discussions, and the submission of assignments.

## Sample Schedules

\*The times shown in the schedules below are subject to change. These schedules are meant to provide readers with a general idea of what the typical school day will look like, regardless of in-person, hybrid or remote learning models

### High School

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
	Students go to first period class	Students go to first period class		Students go to first period class	Students go to first period class
7:55-9:10 (1-hour 15 min)	Period 1	Period 5	Period 1 7:55-8:25	Period 1	Period 5
9:20-10:35 (1-hour 15 min)	Period 2	Period 6	Period 2 8:35-9:05	Period 2	Period 6
10:45-12:35 (1-hour 30 min)	Period 3	Period 7	Period 3 9:15-9:45	Period 3	Period 7
12:45-2:00 (1-hour 15 min)	Period 4	BRB	Period 4 9:55-10:25	Period 4	BRB
2:00-2:05	Scattered dismissals		Period 5 10:35-11:05		
	get to lockers, find bus, etc.		Period 6 11:15-11:45		
			Period 7 11:55-12:25 (STUDENT DISMISSAL)		
			Teacher Common Planning Time 1:05 p.m.-2:05 p.m.		

## Middle School

<b>A</b>	<b>B</b>	<b>C</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>E</b>	<b>F</b>
Enrichment/Remediation Option	Enrichment/Remediation Option	Enrichment/Remediation Option	Enrichment/Remediation Option	Enrichment/Remediation Option	Enrichment/Remediation Option
1	2	3	4	5	6
2	3	4	Gr. 8 Raider Time 5	6	1
3	4	5	6	1	2
Raider Time	Raider Time	Raider Time	Advisory	Raider Time	Raider Time
4	5	6	1	2	3
5	6	1	Gr. 7 Raider Time 2	3	4
6	1	2	Gr. 6 Raider Time 3	4	5

## Elementary Schools

This sample hybrid model elementary school schedule is shown to merely depict what a school day might resemble for in-school and remote students.

*Student Schedule - Hybrid Sample*

In-Person Learning Days		Remote Learning w/ Instruction Day (Wednesday)		Remote Learning Days	
8:40-9:00	Arrival	8:45-9:15	Virtual Morning Meeting/SEL	9:15-9:30	Virtual Greeting/Recording
9:00-9:30	Morning Meeting/SEL	9:15-9:30	Virtual Movement Break (Home Bathroom Break)	9:30-10:00	LEXIA
9:30-11:00	ELA	9:30-10:15	Virtual Content Lesson	10:00-10:30	Independent Reading
11:00-11:15	Structured Recess	10:15-10:30	Virtual- Review Independent Classroom Assignments	10:30-10:45	Movement/Rest Break
11:15-11:45	LUNCH	10:30-10:45	Movement/Rest Break	10:45-11:15	ELA Classroom Assignment
11:45-1:30	Math/Science	10:45-11:15	Independent Reading	11:15-11:30	Play Outside
1:30-2:00	Special (A, M, PE, H)	11:15-11:30	Play Outside	11:30-12:00	LUNCH
2:00-2:15	Structured Recess	11:30-12:00	LUNCH	12:00-12:15	Math Review Game
2:15-2:45	Social Studies	12:00-12:45	ELA Classroom Assignment	12:15-12:45	Reflex/Splash Math
2:45-3:15	Closing Circle/SEL	12:45-1:45	Go Math Video/Math Classroom Assignment	12:45-1:00	Movement/Rest Break
3:15-3:30	Dismissal	1:45-2:00	Movement/Rest Break	1:00-2:00	Go Math Video/Math Classroom Assignment
		2:00-3:00	Special Bingo	2:00-3:00	Special BINGO

Time	Full Remote (M, T, Th, Fr)	Full Remote (Wednesday)
8:45-9:15	Virtual Morning Meeting/SEL	Virtual Morning Meeting/SEL
9:15-9:30	Virtual Movement Break (Home Bathroom Break)	Virtual Movement Break (Home Bathroom Break)
9:30-10:30	Virtual Content Lessons/Assignments	Virtual Content Lessons/Assignments
10:30-10:45	Movement Break	Movement Break
10:45-11:15	Independent Break-out Reading-Work/Virtual Small group/1:1 Virtual Instruction	Independent Break-out Reading-Work/Virtual Small group/1:1 Virtual Instruction
11:15-11:30	Play Outside/Recess Activity	Play Outside/Recess Activity
11:30-12:00PM	Lunch	Lunch
12:00-1:00	Virtual Content Lessons/Assignments	ELA/SS Classroom Assignment
1:00-2:00	Independent Break-out Reading-Work/Virtual Small group/1:1 Virtual Instruction	Go Math Video/Math/STEM Classroom Assignment
2:00-2:30	Movement Break/SEL/Closing circle etc.	Reflex/Splash Math
2:30-3:30	Special Virtual Live Lesson/Bingo	Special Bingo

# Recommended Model

The Somerset Public Schools and Somerset Berkley Regional School District will resume student learning on September 14th through a phased-in remote-to-hybrid model of learning. This replicates the very effective manner in which the Commonwealth of Massachusetts has reopened businesses across the state: slowly, methodically, and strategically. **Students will begin school remotely** with the exception of high-needs special education students, who will begin in-person. Remote learning will replicate the school day (fixed schedules, start and end times, attendance, etc.) through both synchronous and asynchronous instruction. More details about remote teaching and learning expectations will be shared with students and families in the coming weeks.

In time, we will transition to a hybrid learning model by implementing changes in our school schedules and operating procedures to ensure that in-person learning is both safe and successful. This hybrid approach will require strategies to ensure physical distancing, as well as a series of other critical health and safety measures, including wearing face coverings, washing hands frequently, cleaning and sanitizing facilities, screening regularly for symptoms of illness, and staying home from school when sick, among others. Our planning process includes a comprehensive set of strategies and investments to minimize the risk of transmitting the virus. The hybrid learning model will bring students back into school for in-person instruction in smaller, socially distanced groups on a rotating basis, combined with a robust remote learning program on days students are not scheduled to be physically in school.

This phased-in approach will lead to our ultimate goal of full, in-person learning for all students, returning students to school in a safe manner aligned with best practices and CDC guidelines. **Regardless of the in-person or hybrid models, any family may opt to have their child learn remotely this year.**

## Phase One: Professional Learning (August 26 – September 11)

Professional learning will be provided for all faculty and staff in areas of health and safety, remote teaching, social-emotional learning, and other mandated areas of instruction. Faculty and staff will also be afforded collaborative time to modify curricula, design baseline assessments, and develop lessons for remote teaching. This is a critical first step in preparing for our students return.

## Phase Two: Remote Learning (September 14 – TBD)

All students return to school remotely with the exception of high-needs special education students, who will begin in-person. Following the professional learning experiences of phase one, faculty and staff will be prepared to teach in a remote learning environment, building on best practices observed during the spring remote learning experience as well as the practices and structures that were not effective for students. During this phase, educators will give baseline assessments to identify individual and collective academic achievement gaps from the Spring. This essential data will guide educators to determine necessary student supports and interventions. Details about the timeline for the implementation of the hybrid learning model will be communicated with families, students, and teachers as they are determined.

## Phase Three: Hybrid Learning (TBD)

Under the hybrid model, students return to school for in-person instruction two days per week. Currently, the plan is to gradually re-introduce students to school by bringing back several grade levels at a time until all grade levels have returned. As described earlier, students would be

divided into two main cohorts, identified alphabetically. Exceptions will be made for students in the same household with different last names so that siblings would be assigned to the same cohort. For those students who request to continue remote learning only, those requests would be granted. The districts will develop metrics to help guide future determinations about the return to remote learning or progressing into in-person learning.

#### **Phase Four: In-Person Learning (TBD)**

Under the model, which is the ultimate goal for all students this year, students return to school for in-person instruction five days per week. For those students who request to continue remote learning only, those requests would be granted. Implementing this phase will adhere to all health and safety protocols that are required by DESE, and local and state health agencies.