



HOLYOKE PUBLIC SCHOOLS

A PATHWAY FOR EVERY STUDENT

Return to School Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

Updated: August 21, 2020

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General

How will schools open this September?

In response to family, student, staff, and community feedback and due to the current health environment in Holyoke, **the majority of HPS students will start the school year remotely.**

In order to ensure that the students who need the most get the most, **we have selected K-12 students for whom in-person instruction is most essential, and their families will have the option to choose in-person or fully remote learning.**

- This group of students includes Career and Vocational Technical Education (Dean Campus) students, students with disabilities in substantially separate classrooms, and English Learners defined as Newcomers. Newcomers are students who have newly arrived (two years or less) to the mainland U.S. or are new to English dominant instruction.
- Throughout the year, we will consider adding students for whom remote learning is less conducive.

Please note that in-person students will be in school on Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Friday, except for Dean's CVTE students who will be in person one day per week (Mon - Seniors, Tues - Freshman, Thurs - Sophomores, Fri - Juniors) and the remaining days will be remote learning days.

All students who are invited for in-person learning will be contacted on or before Mon, August 24. Please read more in [Dr. Vázquez Matos' community letter, executive summary, and SY20-21 Return to School Plan.](#)

How has the school calendar changed?

The revised SY20-21 calendar is available on our [website](#). Commissioner Riley and the Massachusetts Teachers Association (MTA) worked together to ensure that every district in the Commonwealth has at least 10 days of professional learning for teachers prior to the first day of school for students.

In Holyoke, **school will begin for students in grades 1-12 on Monday, September 14, and for students in grades PreK and Kindergarten on Monday, September 21.** We will have a staggered start for in-person learning for select students. The tentative schedule for gradual entry (based on student enrollment and staffing) is:

- September 14: High School programs: CVTE, select special education populations (TIP, RISE, Functional, SHINE), Newcomers (9-12), and Transition Academy
- September 21: Grades K-8 Newcomers, Peck School (TIP, SHINE), Veritas Prep (Functional)
- September 28: STEM Academy (LLD, ABL), Lawrence School (TIP), Sullivan School (RISE, SHINE), Donahue (ABL)

How do I stay informed about Return to School?

Please check your email periodically for updates about reopening, be sure to read the receiver's Holyoke Updates, visit our [Return to School webpage](#), and follow us on social media ([Twitter](#), [Facebook](#), and [Instagram](#)). If you have not been receiving our emails, texts, and phone calls through the district messaging system, please complete this form at <https://bit.ly/2PGTKgQ> to update your information.

Do students need to wear uniforms?

The selected students who will be learning in-person at school do not need to wear uniforms, although they may choose to. The priority is on creating a safe environment; families do need to ensure the student has a face covering/mask. Contact your school if you cannot get a mask.

Will before and aftercare be available?

There will not be any before or after school care to begin the school year. This may change if more students come back to school.

Will students have access to meals during the week?

For remote learners, we will set up [meal distribution sites](#) at our schools across the City to ensure equitable access to food. We may need to adjust our current times (10am-12:30pm, MWF) for meal pick-up once the schedule for synchronous vs. asynchronous learning is determined. Information will be available by early September. Cafeteria menus will continue being available on the [website](#), and families can text Holyoke to 88257 for more information.

According to DESE and USDA (United States Department of Agriculture) requirements, only HPS students will be allowed breakfast and lunch. We will not be allowed to distribute meals to younger siblings or non-HPS students, unless regulations change.

In-person learners will have breakfast in the classroom and lunch. In alignment with DESE's facilities and operations guidance (July 22), when students are physically present in school buildings, they will be spaced at least 6-feet apart for eating, since they are unable to wear their masks/face coverings during this time. Most meals will be served in the classroom, although the cafeteria could also be used.

Will students be able to play sports in Holyoke?

The sports guidance was released on August 18th. We are awaiting further guidance from DESE on when the final date is to determine whether Holyoke can participate, based on whether Holyoke is in the yellow or red based on the [Department of Public Health \(DPH\)'s metric](#) of average daily cases per 100,000 residents. Districts in "red" *must postpone their entire season, including practices*, until the floating season later in the year.

What if I need childcare?

As of 8/20/20, the YMCA and Boys and Girls Club are approved childcare sites. We are continuing to work with community partners to identify opportunities for child care and remote learning support for children and will update you as more information becomes available.

Safety and Health

What is HPS doing to keep staff and children safe?

Most students will be learning remotely. In order to keep students and staff who are physically present in our buildings as safe as possible, HPS will implement a [detailed plan](#) which includes:

- A personal responsibility [Return to School Safety Pledge for Students](#) (PDF) | [En Español](#) (PDF) to stay home when ill and follow all other precautions, required of each student, family and staff member.
- Masks required **for all staff and students in grades PreK-12**, unless prevented due to a medical condition or behavior concern. Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) for staff members, especially those who work with the most vulnerable students.
- Social distancing in classrooms of at least 6-feet and smaller groups of students in each classroom.
- Enhanced cleaning procedures, including cleaning high-touch surfaces multiple times a day, regular cleaning daily and deep cleaning between cohorts of students.
- Proper ventilation and classes outdoors at the discretion of teachers to promote fresh air.
- Staff training on new safety and health procedures.
- Extremely restricted access to all buildings by non-HPS employees.
- Quick access to COVID-19 testing through local testing [sites](#).
- Contact tracing to quickly inform students, families, and staff if possible exposure to COVID-19 has occurred.

What information did you use to develop plans to safely open in Fall 2020?

The Reopening Leadership Team (RLT) carefully reviewed all [guidance](#) released by DESE, which was informed by the MA COVID-19 Command Center's [Medical Advisory Board](#) (a group of physicians and other health experts), Dr. Sandra Nelson (MD, Infectious Disease, Massachusetts General Hospital), Dr. Lloyd Fisher (President, Massachusetts Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics), and many other members of the MA medical and educational community. HPS solicited input from families and staff through surveys and town hall meetings and reviewed data about the level of engagement during the Spring 2020 remote learning. HPS has also carefully considered the evolving health data and environment in Holyoke and Massachusetts. HPS leaders will meet at least weekly with Sean Gonsalves, Registered Sanitarian, Director of the Holyoke Board of Health to review health metrics and continue to refine our return to school plans.

What are requirements regarding face coverings/ masks?

All students in grades PreK-12 are required to wear a face covering/mask when physically at school, unless a medical or behavioral reason prevents them from doing so. (In this case, a face shield may be provided.) Face coverings are an important measure to take to reduce the spread of COVID-19, and are effective, especially when used in combination with social distancing and proper hand washing. Some people are infected with COVID-19 and don't have symptoms (asymptomatic); face coverings help reduce the spread by containing the infected person's respiratory droplets from traveling to other people. Families should supply their child(ren) with face coverings/masks as an essential back-to-school supply. However, if families are not able to get a face covering, they should contact the school for assistance. Each school will also have back-up, disposable masks.

Face coverings should fit your student properly (covering the nose and mouth), and are comfortable so that your child is more likely to keep one on. **Per CDC recommendations, face coverings/masks that have an exhalation valve are prohibited as they could increase the risk of spread of COVID-19** since the purpose of masks is to keep respiratory drops from reaching others.

Will there be face covering/ mask breaks?

Socially distant mask breaks will be built into the schedule for students and staff multiple times throughout the day. Since students will be spaced 6-feet apart, mask breaks can occur in the classroom. We also encourage educators to use outdoor spaces to provide mask breaks.

How are we going to ensure that students wear masks? What are we going to do if they do not?

The student and parent/guardians [COVID-19 Safety Pledge for Students](#) (PDF) | [En Español](#) (PDF) is a proactive way to clearly explain the expectation and importance of wearing a mask/face covering. All students and 1 parent/guardian per household will be required to sign the pledge as part of the back-to-school packet. Teachers should also be proactive at the beginning of the year and carefully go through what the COVID-19 safety pledge means to individual students and to the class as a community of learners. If students do not comply with mask-wearing or other components of the safety pledge, teachers will work with them on an individual basis through gentle reminders and restating the expectation. If this doesn't remedy the situation, the teacher will work with building administration and the FACE staff to work with the family to address the behavior.

The district is also working on proactive messaging through social media and other communication updates. For example, we launched a social media campaign this summer where students, families and staff submitted pictures of themselves wearing masks/face coverings. Additionally, [here are resources families and teachers](#) can use now to explain the importance of wearing a mask and how to do so.

Please note, students who cannot wear masks for medical or behavioral reasons may wear a face shield instead, in which case staff who work with them may have additional PPE. Families should work with their child's teacher or special education team on a case-by-case basis. If the teacher needs support, they can reach out to the school nurse and their immediate supervisor.

What is being done to ensure students and staff are safe in our older buildings? What is the plan for air circulation in classrooms that don't have windows or classrooms that only have one working window?

HPS is taking prudent and practical preventative measures, in alignment with CDC and DESE guidelines, to improve air quality in our buildings and reduce the risk of COVID-19 spread, which are in alignment with CDC and DESE guidelines.

- Heating ventilation and air conditioning (HVAC) preventative maintenance will be conducted as prescribed by the recognized industry standards and established preventative maintenance procedures.
- Building maintenance staff will work with service providers to ensure timely service of all equipment in our buildings.
- Ensure we are ever vigilant in checking and increasing outside air exchange rates to the specific equipment's full potential.
- Maintain and review with regularity all preventative maintenance and inspection records to ensure and confirm that maximum HVAC efficiencies have been provided.
- Upgrade and replace air filters with greater regularity to reduce COVID-19 transmission potential.
- HPS has air conditioning in many of its buildings, most of them are window units. Where possible, we will ensure that all classroom windows are functioning properly so that windows can be opened to allow increased ventilation and fresh air into the classrooms. In areas that may be of concern, we will work to secure air purifiers to circulate clean air. In addition, cleaning and disinfecting will be done daily to ensure spaces safe for learning.

Are students required to get the flu vaccine even if they are in remote learning?

Yes. Per the August 19th [guidelines from the MA Department of Public Health](#) and DESE, "Immunization requirements must be met in all models of learning." Students must have their vaccine by December 31st, although earlier is recommended.

All school immunization requirements, including this new requirement for the seasonal influenza vaccine, apply to all students, regardless of whether the student is learning remotely or in person. Visit our [Health and Wellness webpage](#) for more information about immunization requirements.

Are you requiring students and staff to be tested for COVID-19 prior to beginning school this fall?

No, we are not providing testing. Per the student and parent/family [personal responsibility pledges](#) and staff policy, people who experience symptoms of COVID-19 must be tested prior to returning to school or self-isolate for 14 days.

What will happen if a student experiences symptoms or tests positive for COVID-19?

We have developed a COVID-19 response protocol for when an individual who displays symptoms similar to COVID-19 or tests positive for COVID-19. This response includes working closely with the Holyoke Board of Health and the HPS response team which will consist of the school/building Nurse, Supervisor, HR, and Custodian. See the *Safety and Wellness* section on page 35 of the [Return to School Plan](#) for detailed information about our COVID-19 Response Protocols.

Any child who becomes ill must report to the nurse immediately, who will contact the parents/caregivers for pickup. At each school, a specific room will be maintained for students with COVID-19 symptoms that is separate from the nurse's office or spaces where other ailments are treated per [DESE's operations and facilities guidelines](#) (July 22).

At each school building, the school nurse will be the primary point of contact for COVID-19 concerns; their contact information will be shared with all staff and families. While specific responses may vary, there are some common elements for each possible COVID-19 scenario.

- For suspected COVID-19 symptoms, the nurse will evaluate symptoms, separate the symptomatic individual from others, the custodian will clean and disinfect spaces visited by the person, the individual will be referred for COVID-19 testing and advised to stay at home while awaiting results.
- If the test is positive, the individual will remain home at least 10 days and until at least 3 days have passed with no fever and improvement in other symptoms. They will be expected to monitor symptoms, notify the school and personal close contacts, and answer the call from the local board of health or Massachusetts Community Tracing Collaborative to help identify close contacts to help them prevent transmission. Contact tracing will be initiated promptly by the school nurses whenever an individual is known to be displaying symptoms related to COVID-19. When there is a confirmed COVID-19 case, this information will be shared with the Holyoke Board of Health. When appropriate, close contacts of a known COVID-19 positive individual will be notified and advised to get tested or quarantine for 14 days. All staff will be notified when there is a confirmed case in the building. It is important to note that names of individuals are not provided to staff or families. Importantly, the individual's identity will be protected throughout this process.

Remote Learning

What is remote learning?

Remote learning is when students engage in synchronous (live) and asynchronous (independent) learning, under the guidance and direction of a Holyoke teacher. Students will still follow a standards-based curriculum aligned to the Massachusetts Frameworks. Home schooling requires that the parent/guardian is responsible for securing and delivering the curriculum and students are not given support from HPS. All homeschooling plans and curriculum is subject to approval by the HPS Chief Instructional Officer.

What will the remote learning model look like this year?

We learned a lot from our remote learning efforts in Spring 2020. With more time to prepare and clear guidance from DESE, remote learning for SY20-21 will look much different. Every student will have their own device, and the Internet will be provided to students who need it.

The remote learning day for K-8 will run from 8 a.m. to 3 p.m. and for high school from 8:45 a.m. to 3 p.m. It will include both synchronous (live) and asynchronous (self-paced) learning. See Academics / Instruction section for more details. Synchronous learning will include direct teacher instruction, student collaboration time, and independent work time while the teacher confers with individual students - just like would happen in a traditional classroom. Asynchronous learning will mostly take place in the afternoon, where students will primarily work independently, and teachers will be available to answer questions. Students who receive additional services (e.g. language support, therapies, reading intervention, etc.) will have opportunities throughout the day to work with additional staff.

Students will have access to all content areas (mathematics, english language arts, science, social studies, arts/music, physical education, and social emotional learning). Teachers and other staff will also be available to provide additional academic or social emotional support.

What learning platforms will be used?

The district Google Classroom in all grades as the learning management systems (LMS). Zoom is the video conferencing platform for live classes.

Technology

Will my child get a device? When?

All students will have a device. Students in grades 3-12 will be issued a chromebook, with the exception of grades 6-8 students at Peck and Holyoke STEM who already have iPads as part of the Verizon Innovative Learning Schools (VILS) program. Students in grades PreK-2 will be issued an iPad. We have all the devices, with the exception of some of the iPads, which we expect to receive in mid-September, and then will image the devices with the appropriate software.

We will contact families by August 31 with more information about picking up devices and instructional materials.

Academics / Instruction

What is the timing of school day for in-person and remote learners?

Remote Learning:

- HHS - North, HHS - Dean, HHS - OA: 8:45 a.m. - 3 p.m., with synchronous learning from 8:45am - 1pm and lunch/asynchronous/office hours from 1 - 3pm
- K-8 (except Veritas): 8 a.m. - 3 p.m., with synchronous learning from 9 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. (Note: some targeted assistance and additional services will start at 8 a.m., but most students will begin with asynchronous learning at 8 a.m.) Sample schedules available below.
- Veritas will be similar, waiting for details.

In-person Learning for Cohort C:

- HHS - North, HHS - Dean, Transitions: 7:45 a.m. - 1 p.m.
- K - 8 (including Veritas): 8:45 a.m. - 2:15 p.m.
- As a reminder, Wednesday is a deep cleaning day. No students will be in school. Cohort C students will follow the remote schedule.

The benefits of these schedules include:

- In-person learning opportunities for students who need the most
- A better balance of synchronous vs. asynchronous learning time for all students as compared to Spring 2020
- A set schedule for families and staff
- Time for therapy services, special education services and direct language instruction at set times throughout the day
- Time for Cohort C students to be included in general education classes
- Common planning time for teachers across the district on Wednesday afternoons
- Teachers and other staff are available at consistent times for student help
- In-person learners have breakfast and lunch at school
- Recognition through a shortened day (5.25 - 5.5 hours) for in-person learners will ease the transition back to this new way of doing school
- Staggered times allow sufficient time for bus cleaning between cohorts of students

All HPS school schedules have been coordinated to allow for greater support for students and families' individual needs as well as provide strong instructional learning for all students. Following the same schedule allows for prioritized students in Cohort C to participate remotely in synchronous (live remote learning) content instruction with their peers while receiving support from Special Education or English as a Second Language (ESL) teachers. Students in Cohort C will also be provided in-person instruction from their special education or ESL teachers four days a week.

The high school campuses will run an 8:45 a.m. - 3:00 p.m. remote school day and a 7:45 a.m. -1:00 p.m. Cohort C in-person day. All PreK-8 schools will run an 8 a.m. - 3 p.m. remote school day and an 8:45 a.m. - 2:15 p.m. Cohort C in-person school day. The coordination of all school schedules supports both strong learning structure and a tiered transportation schedule for students prioritized for in-person learning. The tentative transportation schedule is as follows; exact details will be finalized prior to the first day of in-person school for those students participating in Cohort C.

A.M. Schedule

Tier 1 - 7:00-7:45 a.m. pick up and drop off at high school **Disinfect in-between**

Tier 2 - 8:00 - 8:45 a.m. pick up and drop off at K-8 schools

P.M. Schedule

Tier 1 - 1:15 - 2:00 pick up from high school and drop off at home **Disinfect in-between**

Tier 2 - 2:15 - 3:00 p.m. pick up from K-8 schools and drop off at home

School leaders and their teams will adhere to the following requirements when creating their school specific schedules. Please note, the Veritas remote learning schedule may vary slightly.

- The student school day will run from 8-3 p.m.*
- Synchronous (live) sessions will run from 9:00-12:00 p.m.
- In-person school day for Cohort C will run from 8:45-2:15 p.m.**
- Some small group instruction, intervention groups and related services can be provided during asynchronous (self-paced) learning in the afternoon but not beyond 3 p.m. unless arrangements are made with families and agreed upon with service providers/educators.

Schools will communicate school specific detailed schedules with families by September 9, 2020.

*Asynchronous (self-paced) remote learning will be completed in the afternoons/evenings as best meets family schedules and needs.

**Cohort C programming may run only in some schools with a staggered re-entry schedule. The targeted re-entry schedule for Cohort C may continually update using current health and safety metrics. More information will be communicated with families next week.

What are example student schedules?

General Overview of Remote and Cohort C Schedule

Time	9-12 Remote	Time	9-12 Cohort C In-Person
		7:45-8:15	Arrival at school, handwashing, etc..
		8:15-8:45	Breakfast
8:45-8:55	Squad / check ins / advisory	8:45-8:55	Squad / check ins / advisory
9:00-1:00	4 Content Class Sessions	9:00-1:00	4 Content Class Sessions (students attend any gen ed classes assigned via zoom) *Lunch in the classroom included during this time
1:00-1:30	Lunch	1:00	Dismissal - arrive home by 2:00
1:30-3:00	Conferencing	2:00-3:00	Remote conferencing, direct services, asynchronous work

Time	PK-8 Remote	Time	K-8 Cohort C In-Person
8:00- 9:00	Asynchronous work, direct service, check-ins	8:45- 9:00	Arrival at school, handwashing, etc..
9:00- 12:00	Synchronous Content Sessions	9:00- 12:00	SWD - Direct Instruction EL - Join Synchronous Sessions w/support from EL staff
12:00-12:30	Lunch	12:00-12:30	Lunch
12:30-3:00	Asynchronous learning, direct instruction, interventions, conferencing	12:30-2:00	EL and SWD Direct Instruction
		2:00- 2:15	Prep for dismissal - handwashing, etc..
		2:15	Dismissal - arrive home by 3:00

*Please note, the Veritas remote learning schedule may vary slightly. Contact Veritas with questions.

If students decide to do remote learning and cannot connect for a day due to medical reasons, would that be considered an absence?

Students are expected to attend class daily and throughout the full day. If a student needs to miss a day for any reason, the parent/guardian should be in contact with the teacher to inform them of the situation and ask about making up missing work. More information about taking attendance will be released before school starts.

How will grades be given and accessed in a remote environment?

Grades will be collected in SchoolBrains to generate student report cards. The district is still determining if access will be set up for parents/guardians to access a web portal linked to SchoolBrains so that they can access grades- otherwise, report cards will be mailed out.

With full remote learning, will students still have opportunities to see their friends/classmates?

Schools may set up "The Scholar's Lounge" for their school. This is a virtual socialization space staffed by a school-based staff member where students will interact with classmates and school-peers in their age group (grades may vary but based on developmental stage). This is a non-academic virtual session where students are able to socialize, connect, and support each other to stay connected while in remote learning.

Special Education

How will students receive services if they are learning remotely?

Students will receive special education services both synchronously and asynchronously from special education staff based on individual IEP's. Services can include direct instruction, consultation with teachers and families, teletherapy, and support services from assigned staff like paraprofessionals. Even in the remote model, some students will be offered in person learning opportunities. Families will be contacted if their student(s) qualifies for in person learning.

How will evaluations for services happen?

Most evaluations will be completed virtually during remote learning, with some exceptions being made for in person testing if all health and safety measures are approved and staffing is available. In the Hybrid model, testing will be completed mainly in person.

COVID-19 Symptoms, Scenarios and Guidelines

What is COVID-19 and how is it spread?

Coronavirus, or COVID-19 is a new respiratory virus, not previously seen in humans. The severity of illness ranges from mild to severe, and is primarily spread through respiratory droplets when an infected person coughs, sneezes, or talks, or a person comes in contact with a surface that has the virus on it and then touches their nose/mouth/eyes.

What are the symptoms of COVID-19?

Symptoms include:

- Fever (100.0° 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*

What should I do if my child or someone in my household is experiencing any symptoms of COVID-19?

If your child, or anyone in your household is experiencing symptoms of COVID-19, please keep your child home from school and call their school nurse and healthcare provider to be referred for a COVID-19 test, and/or further evaluation. If your child has symptoms that are suspicious of COVID-19, they should remain home until they receive the results of their test. If positive, the Holyoke Board of Health and/or school nurse will follow up with more instructions for isolation.

If my child is diagnosed with COVID-19, will their privacy be maintained?

Yes. Your child's name or personal identification will not be revealed if diagnosed with COVID-19. Close contacts will be notified and told that they have been exposed to someone who has been diagnosed with COVID-19 and will be provided with information about quarantine and given further instructions.

Who qualifies as a close contact?

Per the August 19th guidance from the MA Department of Public Health and DESE, "if a student or staff member tests positive for COVID-19, their close contacts will be defined as only those who have been within 6 feet of distance of the individual for at least fifteen minutes, while the person was infectious. The infectious period begins 2 days prior to symptom onset. If someone is asymptomatic, the infectious period is considered to begin 2 days prior to the collection of their positive test. While previous guidance stated that all students in an elementary classroom would be defined as close contacts, this new guidance provides a narrower definition of a close contact which mirrors DPH guidance." The onset and duration of viral shedding and the period of infectiousness for COVID-19 are not yet known with certainty. Based on existing literature, the incubation period (the time from exposure to development of symptoms) of SARS-CoV2 and other coronaviruses (e.g. MERS-CoV, SARS-CoV) ranges from 2-14 days.

How long will close contacts remain out of school/work?

Per the August 19th guidance from the MA Department of Public Health and DESE, if the individual was a close contact to someone who tested positive for COVID-19, “the individual must self-quarantine for 14 days after the last exposure to the person who tested positive, regardless of test result. After further consultation with the medical community, we are updating this guidance as the virus can cause illness from 2-14 days after exposure and even asymptomatic individuals can transmit the virus. Going forward, even if an individual identified as a close contact receives a negative test result, they must continue to self-quarantine for the full 14 days as the virus may take up to 14 days to cause illness.”

What is the definition of a fever?

Per the August 19th guidance from the MA Department of Public Health and DESE, “Over the summer, the threshold for a COVID-19 related fever by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has been updated from greater than 100.4°F to greater than 100.0°F. As a result, going forward, a fever as a COVID-19 symptom will be defined as 100.0°F or higher.”

What metrics will be used to decide the opening and closing of schools?

On August 11th, the Governor’s Office released [metrics](#) that will help local municipalities and school districts plan accordingly, as it relates to the operation of cities, towns, and school districts. The HPS leadership team and Holyoke Board of Health Director Sean Gonsalves will review and discuss the following metrics each week and over time to ensure that our chosen learning model matches the health environment. The [Weekly COVID-19 Public Health Report](#) is available every Wednesday by 4 p.m.

- Color-coded metric: Number of daily COVID-19 cases per 100,000 residents over a two-week period
 - Red: Greater than 8
 - Yellow: Between 4-8
 - Green: Less than 4
- Test positivity rate over a two-week period (% positive COVID-19 tests out of all tests conducted)
- Upward/downward trend in cases

Preparing Your Child for School

What can I do to prepare my child for school?

We ask that you review the [Return to School Safety Pledge for Students](#) (PDF) | [En Español](#) (PDF) with your student. The pledge will be included in the back-to-school packet which will be shared shortly.

In-person learners should practice the following skills at home before the start of school:

- Mask application and removal
- The importance of not touching their nose/mouth/eyes
- Proper disposal of their mask
- Frequent and proper hand washing
- Social distancing
- Physical distancing of 6 feet
- Not to share food/drinks/cups
- Stay home when sick
- Cough/Sneeze hygiene
- Conduct daily health and symptom screening (CDC, MA DPH)

Remote learners

We recommend reading this New York Times article about how parents/ guardians can help prepare their student/s for remote learning [How to Proactively Prepare for Distance Learning](#).

Our family is going out of state for vacation, can my child attend school in-person when we return?

As of August 1, all Massachusetts residents who are traveling out of state must complete a Massachusetts Travel Form (<https://www.mass.gov/forms/massachusetts-travel-form>) prior to arrival, and must quarantine for 14 days or produce a negative COVID-19 test result that has been administered up to 72 hours prior to arrival to Massachusetts. More information can be found at <https://www.mass.gov/info-details/covid-19-travel-order>. Travel to/from the following states are exempt from this requirement: Connecticut, New Hampshire, Hawaii, New Jersey, Maine, New York, Vermont. If you and your family visit a non-exempt state within 14 days of school starting, your student will need to quarantine for the 14 days (or have documentation of a negative test) before entering school.

How is the district determining when more students can be brought back for in-person learning?

Holyoke will review the health metrics referenced above with the local Board of Health each weekly. We will look at the trends across weeks to make decisions across months and terms. We will evaluate the learning model each quarter (for middle school and high school) and trimester (elementary school) to determine if we should make a change to the learning model. We will aim to make a decision about the next quarter or trimester at least 3 weeks ahead of the new period. Each month, we will evaluate the metrics to see if we should expand who qualifies for the small group in-person instruction ("Cohort C"). In any scenario, families will have the option to remain in remote learning throughout SY20-21.