

Superintendent's Update

Wednesday, October 6, 2021

Today was the 24th day of classes for the 2021-22 school year. Yesterday (Tuesday, October 5) was a half-day for students dedicated to faculty and staff development. The district's professional development offerings on this half-day may be accessed [HERE](#). This coming Monday, October 11 there will be no school for students due to the state's Columbus Day holiday. I would like to note that there are currently two bills pending in the Massachusetts State Legislature (H-3191 and S-2027) each of which heard testimony last week that would have this day in the future recognized instead as [Indigineous Peoples Day](#). It is highly unlikely that either bill will advance to a vote prior to next Monday.

All schools are completing their fall Open House nights during this 3-week period. Reluctantly, we made the collective decision as a district to move these open house nights to a virtual format. The dates and times of our scheduled open houses are below:

School	Open House Date
Avery	Thursday, September 23
ECEC	Wednesday, October 13th and Thursday, October 14th
Greenlodge	Wednesday, September 29th
Oakdale	Thursday, September 23rd
Riverdale	Thursday, September 30th
DMS	Thursday October 7th
DHS	Thursday October 14

Spring 2021 MCAS Results

On Tuesday, September 21 the state released district level score results for spring 2021 MCAS exams. For grades 3-8, these exams were significantly curtailed both in time allotted and in the scope of the assessment. DESE officials have emphasized that due to these changes scores should only be used for broad perspective of overall performance and not for individual school or student progress. We have been

reviewing these results internally within the district and Dr. Kelly will have a more comprehensive review at our October 20 committee meeting.

On Friday, October 1 the district received individual score reports for all students who completed MCAS testing in spring 2021. These reports will be mailed home to families as soon as possible and should be arriving in all homes within the next week or so.

COVID-19 Update

The most recent [COVID-19 data for Dedham](#) shows that cases peaked two weeks ago in the town and the most recent data appears to show a small decrease in positive case rates in town. Below you will find some information about trends in schools and data about our ongoing testing programs (pooled surveillance testing and “Test & Stay” for close contacts):

- a. [COVID cases in schools](#)
- b. [Pooled testing consents in Dedham](#)
- c. [Pooled Testing Results](#)

As the committee is aware, last week we [closed a first grade classroom at the Greenlodge School](#) due to the discovery of 5 student COVID cases over a 10-day period. These students were provided with remote learning for the week of September 27 - October 1. During that time, pooled testing did not reveal any additional cases.

At 5:00 AM yesterday (Tuesday, October 5) we received results from the previous day’s pooled testing and were informed that there were 5 pools (4 at Greenlodge and 1 at Avery) showing positive results. This triggered “Test and Stay” rapid testing for about 40 students prior to the start of school yesterday (in addition to the 20+ students who were continuing their 5 days of “Test & Stay” tests from last week’s positives). Those rapid tests revealed 6 definitive positive individuals (one pool contained 2 individuals who were positive). These 6 positive cases triggered individual contact tracing for each positive case which revealed over 30 additional close contacts at Greenlodge and another 14 close contacts at Avery. Some of these close contacts were the result of exposures from the YMCA after-care program. Remember, that “non-school” close contacts MAY NOT participate in “Test & Stay”.

This morning we tested almost 60 students through the “Test & Stay” program. This screening produced 1 additional positive case from Greenlodge. All other students tested negative and were allowed to return to class at their schools.

On Monday, September 27 DESE Commissioner Jeff Riley announced that he was [extending the mandatory indoor mask mandate](#) for all Massachusetts schools through November 1. In addition, Commissioner Riley delayed the possible implementation of a mask removal option ([for any schools that can demonstrate at least 80% of all faculty, staff, and students are fully vaccinated](#)) until at least October 15. In the 24 days that schools have been open this fall the following COVID cases have been recorded for students and staff:

	Student	Staff
DHS	4	1
DMS	0	0
Avery	8	1
Greenlodge	14	1
Oakdale	0	1
Riverdale	0	0
ECEC	1	0
TOTAL =	27	4

We have continued our weekly meetings with the Dedham Health Department to make sure we are coordinating our efforts and response.

Last week was the first full week of COVID-19 testing for staff and students at all 7 schools. There were a total of 185 pools completed with almost 1400 students and staff participating. The tests were analyzed and returned the same day, and the results showed one positive pool at Oakdale School. [Consent forms for CIC-based COVID-19](#) testing are currently available in six different languages on the [main page of the DPS website](#).

Dedham's "Test and Stay" program continues to allow students to participate in BinaxNow rapid antigen tests to prove non-infection and allow students to remain in school. Based on conversations on Friday, October 1 we are consolidating our "Test and Stay" program to two sites daily: Riverdale and Avery. This allows us to continue permitting this option for parents and provide staffing to maintain this effort. As of Monday, 10/4 we have been utilizing additional staff from CIC (the state's testing vendor) to help accomplish this task.

Oakdale MSBA Project

On September 29 I submitted Dedham's [two required preliminary enrollment questionnaires to the MSBA](#). These two documents were significant steps in the next stage of the eligibility process for rebuilding of the Oakdale Elementary School. On Tuesday, 10/5 we presented [Article 9 to the Finance and Warrant Committee](#) in anticipation of this fall's Town Meeting warrant. The presentation to the Finance & Warrant Committee may be seen [HERE](#). This article requests funds for a feasibility study to move to the next stage of the MSBA process. Fall Town Meeting takes place on Monday, November 15.

On Thursday, September 30 Dr. Langenhorst, Denise Moroney, Ed Gotgart and I presented a proposal to the Capital Expenditures Committee for additional funding to complete DHS library renovation. The bids for this work came in much higher than anticipated, therefore the work was not begun this summer. This request is an item for consideration as [Article 2 on the warrant at Fall Town Meeting](#).

Last Tuesday, September 28 I met with Town Manager Leon Goodwin along with Park & Recreation Director Bob Stanley and Facilities Director Denise Moroney (among others) to discuss the ongoing rehab work planned for the Dolan Center. Due to the scope of this work we discussed the possible move of that Park and Recreation programming to available space at the school department's available space at the former Capen Elementary School building. We agreed to meet at the Capen building later this week to have more direct discussions about this possibility.

Dr. Kelly has filed a preliminary grant with DESE well before the October 4, 2021 deadline so that Dedham Public Schools has access to our federal American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds for 2021. This preliminary grant request was informed by feedback from over 200 parents and faculty/staff via a survey sent out a few weeks ago. At its initial meeting last week, the Budget Subcommittee discussed this grant and how to apply these funds to best meet our educational needs. These funds may be used through September 2024, and it is likely that our allocation of these funds may change over the course of the next three years. Grant amendments are frequently used in such instances but for now there are appropriate placeholders set up so that these funds are available for use.

Town Wide PTO Officers Meeting

On Monday evening, October 4, I met with PTO representatives from all 7 district schools for our annual fall Townwide PTO meeting. I hold these meetings 3x/year so that all groups can be operating in cooperation with each other and communication can be facilitated about the district's overall work. The agenda for the meeting is attached [HERE](#). There were 28 parent representatives present, and it was a very productive conversation.

All licensed educators in Dedham have been busy completing their annual self-assessments and reviewing and updating their annual goals. These were due to be uploaded into TeachPoint (the district's electronic storehouse of evaluation documentation) as of October 1 (last Friday). Each principal, director, and department head will be conducting individual goals meetings with each educator over the next month to review the goals' alignment to school improvement plans and our School Committee goals and (soon to be updated) 5-Year District Strategic Improvement Plan.

Guest Speaker at DHS

Next week, author and Framingham State University writing professor Jennifer De Leon will be visiting DHS on Thursday, October 14 (Day 1). Her visit has been generously funded through a DEF grant. The grant was put in by WL Department Chair Allison Guifarro, WL Teacher Jennifer Leonard-Shaffstein and DHS Librarian Alice Johnson. Ms. De Leon will be speaking to World Languages classes, offering a creating writing workshop, and working with an affinity group and allies in a breakout session.

Her book, *Don't Ask Me Where I'm From*, was one of the books featured on the DHS 2021 Summer Reading List. The DHS Library has several print copies of this novel available for checkout.

I am happy to answer any questions the Committee may have.