

**Dear Parents/Guardians and Staff:**

**It has been over two months now since our students and teachers have been face-to-face in their classrooms. Over that period, our students, parents/guardians, and staff have shown remarkable resilience in the face of constant change and frequent challenges. We are incredibly proud of the Remote Learning Plan that our educators developed and even prouder of the efforts of our staff to constantly update and adjust that Plan in an effort to meet the ever-changing needs of our students in this remote learning setting. While it is inarguable that remote learning does not approach the quality of instruction that takes place in our classrooms every day, nonetheless, Holliston's teachers and staff are working tirelessly to minimize the gap between these two very different models of education. As they always do, Holliston's teachers are giving it their all, while juggling the extraordinary demands of working at home during a pandemic, and we are deeply appreciative of their efforts and proud of their results.**

**One month from today, June 18th, will be the last day of the 2019-2020 school year. While we remain committed to adjusting our current practices to ensure the best possible educational outcomes for the remainder of this school year, we are also focusing our attention on planning for the start of the 2020-2021 school year. Today, the Governor is scheduled to announce his plan for re-opening Massachusetts, but this plan will NOT include much, if any, information about how schools will re-open. However, the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) has formed a large 30-person working group that has been tasked with developing a re-opening plan for Massachusetts' schools. Unfortunately, this plan is not scheduled to be released until the middle-to-end of June, at the earliest.**

**It would be irresponsible, however, to sit idle and wait for that plan to be announced. So, the Holliston Public Schools has formed its own team to begin to study the options and develop an understanding of how each of these options would be implemented. The team will initially consist of: the entire senior leadership team of the Holliston Public Schools (Superintendent, Assistant Superintendent, Director of Student Services, Business Administrator, Director of Technology, as well as the four building principals); Holliston's Fire Chief (who also serves as Holliston's Emergency Management Director); Holliston's Police Chief and the HPS School Nurse Leader. Initially, we are focusing our planning and brainstorming on the issues related to the four most likely scenarios:**

- Business-As-Usual;**
- Full-Opening with Social Distancing/Safety Protocols and Equipment Required;**
- Hybrid Model where only 50% (or some portion) of our students could be physically present in our schools at one time and the remainder would be taught remotely; or**
- 100% Remote model, similar to our current situation.**

**During Phase I of our planning for the fall, we are brainstorming the implications of each of these models on all aspects of our work, such as:**

- Student and staff schedules;
- Health and safety protocols;
- Technology needed by students and staff;
- Professional development of our staff;
- Necessary curriculum, instruction and assessment adaptations;
- Student transportation;
- Medical staffing and equipment;
- Special education services;
- Extra-curricular activities;
- Building cleaning requirements;

... just to name a few.

Following our initial brainstorming, our thinking will be shared with our teaching and professional staff in early June for their feedback, discussion and further refinement. Our goal is to have a draft of this work completed when the state announces its plan in mid-to-late June so that we can make revisions based upon useful guidance from the state. Additionally, once the draft plan is developed, we will be formally soliciting feedback from parents/guardians in late June or early July and throughout the summer in order to inform further adjustments to the plan. We then will be ready to spend the remainder of the summer finalizing our preparations for school opening in whatever form it is expected to take.

It is highly likely, however, that the plan announced by DESE in late June will still be built upon a number of assumptions regarding the expected status of the virus when school is scheduled to open on September 1st. *As a result, we will likely not know for certain what opening day will look like until mid-to-late August. In addition, even after we open schools in the fall, we are going to need to be prepared to toggle between the various scenarios in response to potential changes in the virus in the area.*

We recognize that this is not welcome news for either our parent/guardian community or our staff, each of whom needs to be able to develop family plans for the return to school. If we could make the Holliston Public Schools an island of certainty in the center of all of this uncertainty, we would. But, that will likely not be possible. As we draft this letter on Sunday, May 17th, the Governor is slated to share his initial plan for re-opening Massachusetts tomorrow, yet none of us knows with ANY certainty, what that plan will entail. Whether it's a state-wide plan to reopen our economy or Holliston's plan to reopen school in the fall, that plan is driven by the then-current status of the virus.

It goes without saying that all of the HPS administrators and staff eagerly anticipate the time when we can safely return to our school buildings and resume face to face instruction with all of our kids. We will continue to prepare for all possible scenarios and share the status of our planning efforts as the end of the school year approaches and over the course of the summer as well.

Respectfully,

**Bradford L. Jackson, Ed.D.**  
**Superintendent of Schools**

**Peter J. Botelho, Ed.D.**  
**Assistant Superintendent**