



Reopening School Committee Meeting Report October 5, 2020

The FPS Reopening School Committee met on October 5th to frame the committee goals, review current mitigation strategies, and discuss a proposal for K-5 full reopening.

Discussion Summary

Mitigation: Review of current mitigation strategies raised some questions about moving forward. The Connecticut Department of Public Health (DPH) has stated the need for implementation of several coordinated interventions to greatly reduce the risk of COVID-19 transmission. In order to bring students back full time, we would need to reduce the current six feet distance to three feet. DPH guidelines allow for this flexibility, which is also endorsed by the [American Academy of Pediatrics](#).

At the same time, additional strategies must be used to mitigate risk (e.g., polycarbonate barriers between desks in classrooms and lunchrooms). We will also need to keep windows open through the winter months to maximize air flow. Additional staffing, spaces, and lunch waves will be needed to spread students out for lunch.

Who to bring back first?: The committee is looking to possibly create a plan for a specific group/grade of students to go back full time in elementary. This is the most critical age for reading and math fluency and the impact on parents appears to be greatest at this level. It is a natural place to begin the conversation. Discussion included asking if students receiving special services should be the initial group considered for the full in-person model, as they may not be getting the services they need when they are in-person currently. There was also discussion about bringing middle school students back full time based on parent concerns around middle school hybrid students being “on their own” three days each week.

Current elementary hybrid plan and considerations for changing to full, in-person: The current hybrid model appears to be working thus far and both students and staff are settling into it. Academically, students are moving forward with 2.5 hours of concentrated instruction. We need to consider the impact of changing the instructional learning model from hybrid to full in-person, as well as possibly needing to go full remote (if positivity rates rise). We also need to consider what live streamed classes would look like for K-5 and what additional technology is needed to support it. Teachers will be simultaneously teaching students in front of them as well as those at home. It is possible that the number of remote learners may grow if we switch to a full in-person model. Further, teachers who are comfortable with the hybrid model may choose to leave if we go fully in-person.

Some of these questions can be answered by looking at elementary schools in surrounding Fairfield County districts who have full in-person classes to see what is working well, including cases and transmission rates.

Next Steps (by next meeting):

- Assess ability to get 3-sided barriers
- Audit of technology available to live stream lessons (ongoing)
- Identify number of classrooms per building which would not allow for full in-person
- Parent survey to determine how many would opt for remote if we launch full in-person
- Engage middle school principals in conversation about full in-person return to school

Next Meeting: Monday, October 12