

**MISSION:** To provide opportunities and pathways in a safe, supportive and technology-rich environment that engage, challenge and inspire students to achieve college and career readiness and to contribute to our 21<sup>st</sup> century community.

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SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLS

## **SWANSEA PUBLIC SCHOOLS**

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Dear Swansea Community,

I am acutely aware that this crisis, and subsequent school shut down, has caused significant angst as we work through many, many moving parts to determine what is the best way to get students and staff back into school in the most appropriate, and safe, manner possible. It is very apparent that the social, emotional and educational needs of our students have to take precedence as we move toward the fall.

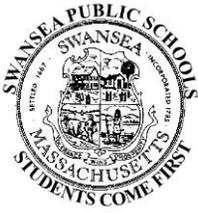
We have been working closely with the Department of Education (DESE), health officials, the state and have established working groups to try and develop plans for the fall based upon the most updated medical guidance. Each district must create a plan with three possible scenarios for the fall; 1. Full in-person education with health and safety measures in place, 2. A hybrid model, with health and safety measures in place that would be a combination of in-person and remote teaching/learning and 3. A fully remote learning model, if indicated by the trajectory of the virus. If we do end up needing to go fully remote, it will look much different that it did when we were 'thrown' into the situation in the spring. There will be schedules, attendance and grading in place which will help make things go much more smoothly.

The initial draft plan is due to DESE on July 31, with the "finalized" plan due on August 10. These plans are being thoughtfully crafted to maximize student learning in the safest way possible. The plans will be shared out and posted on our website once developed.

We understand that there are still many unknowns, which is why it is so difficult to determine what needs to be in place. How students can be transported is a huge question and one for which we are still eagerly awaiting specific directives. The transportation survey that went out was an attempt to garner information about the actual transportation needs of our students, so I appreciate all those who have already filled out the survey. Other items for which we are awaiting specific medical guidance are; athletics, recess, extracurricular activities, band and chorus.

We are wholeheartedly committed to developing plans that are in the best interest of our students and staff. The district has replaced and done upgrades to all of our HVAC systems, with the addition of UV lighting being put into each unit. The UV lighting has been proven to ameliorate up to 97-98% of airborne viruses, bacteria and particulates in the air. This means

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that we are in a very good position to ensure air quality is optimum in every building, classroom and shared spaces such as cafeterias, gymnasiums and auditoriums. We will be the only school district in the area with this system in place.

In addition, safety supplies and equipment have been ordered to ensure that we have sanitizer, wipes and disinfectant in place to keep our schools clean.

Please know that cloth masks will be required for all adults and students in grades 2-12. Masks for Pre-k, K and grade 1 students are highly recommended, but not mandated based upon medical research and guidance which has determined that younger students are much less likely to contract and spread the COVID virus (unlike flu and colds).

We are looking at models that strive for the recommended 6 foot distance, but with a minimum of 3 foot distance. The 3 foot distance would be something that would need to be in place if we are having full in-person learning. This has not yet been decided, but is required as part of the plan that we will submit to the state.

I appreciate the ongoing patience as we work with all of the aforementioned stakeholders to determine what is the safest way to proceed. The plans will be made public once they are determined and submitted to the state, as that is the directive we have received.

We are all in this together and I understand that, where not every person will be happy with what is determined, we are striving to move forward with safety as the number one determining factor and to get students back into meaningful teaching and learning situations.

Stay safe  
Be well

Humbly,

John J. Robidoux  
Superintendent of Schools