



# BLUE HILLS

## REGIONAL TECHNICAL SCHOOL

July 31, 2020

Dear Blue Hills Faculty, Staff, Students, Parents and Caregivers:

We would like to provide you with an update regarding our reopening plan for the fall. Please know that our final plan will be based on what will best protect the health and safety of our students, staff and their families. That has been and will continue to be our top priority.

We will be using the guidance issued by the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) on Wednesday, July 29, which can be found in full [here](#). These guidelines are fluid and may change as the situation surrounding COVID-19 progresses.

We will release more specific information about how our programs will be run this fall should students return to the campus, but wanted to highlight some of the key aspects that will go into developing a final plan based on the state's guidance.

As you have heard, the Massachusetts Department of Education has directed districts to submit by July 31, 2020, a preliminary plan that addresses the feasibility of three options for serving students at the start of the school year. Those options include a full return to daily, in-person attendance, a hybrid plan combining in-school learning with some remote learning, and finally, a 100% remote learning program. At our next School Committee meeting on August 4th our comprehensive plan will be presented. Please go to <https://www.bluehills.org> under the About tab, District School Committee, DSC meetings to obtain information about the meeting. Each district's final plan, approved by its School Committee, is due to the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) by August 10. Given the significant changes these plans will require in the way schools operate, we also must negotiate our proposal with all employee unions impacted. We are on a very tight timeline--a mere two weeks until the August 10th deadline set by the DESE for submitting final fall plans.

In general, we will need to follow the in-person learning guidelines sent out by DESE last month for all schools in the state. That document can be read in its entirety [here](#). These measures include staying home when sick, symptom screening, physical distancing, use of masks, frequent hand hygiene, and improving ventilation as is feasible. Additionally, we will be looking into other preventative measures such as creating outdoor workspaces, safety training for students regarding COVID-19 prevention, safe equipment and materials sharing practices, and different avenues to maintain safe student collaboration.

Wednesday's guidance also provides specific health and safety guidelines for the culinary arts, early education and care, cosmetology, automotive technology and automotive collision, and graphic

communications and marketing programs for the initial months of the academic year. These guidelines include limiting interaction with the public, setting up disinfecting stations, providing appointment-based services only and utilizing online payment methods.

Additionally, co-op placement and internships will be limited to seniors only. Furthermore, clinical sites for health careers are not accepting students at this time due to the increased risk of exposure to COVID-19. It is expected that students will not be able to work at these clinical sites for at least the first two months of the school year and we will share any updates after that time.

In order to adhere to the school re-opening guidance provided by DESE, consistent with recommendations from the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) and the American Pediatric Association, we also do not believe we can safely meet physical distancing requirements with all students and staff in the building at the same time. **However, we do believe we can make significant changes in our school schedule and operating procedures to make a partial return to in-person learning both safe and successful.** This approach will require strategies to ensure physical distancing, as well as a series of other critical health and safety measures, including wearing face coverings, washing hands frequently, cleaning and sanitizing facilities, screening regularly for symptoms of illness, and staying home from school when sick, among others. Our planning process includes a comprehensive set of strategies and investments to minimize the risk of transmitting the virus.

As a result, we will pursue negotiations with impacted unions for a hybrid learning plan, which would bring the students back into school for in-person instruction in smaller, socially distanced groups on a rotating basis, combined with a robust remote learning program on the days students are not scheduled to be physically in school.

We recognize that the circumstances of every family and staff member are different. But rest assured that we are working diligently to explore every option available to us, that we remain guided by the science to keep our students and staff safe and healthy, and that we will be prepared to make adjustments along the way if the public health conditions or other variables change over time.

As we move closer to a final plan, we welcome input and feedback from all of our stakeholders. We invite you to share your questions, comments, and ideas to help inform and strengthen our plans at [2020reopen@bluehills.org](mailto:2020reopen@bluehills.org).

We will keep you informed about our progress in developing a final plan. We will continue to post updates on our website and via email. We are confident that we can prioritize both safety and learning as we prepare for the start of a successful school year. Thank you for your patience and cooperation during these extraordinary times.

Very respectfully,

Jill M. Rossetti, Superintendent-Director

Thomas R. Polito, Jr., School Committee Chair