

Massachusetts education officials will force districts to bring students back into the classroom next month

As posted on the the MA DOE Website:

News from Commissioner Jeffrey C. Riley & the
MA Department of Elementary and Secondary Education

Guidance on In-Person Learning Requirements

Dear Superintendents, Charter School Leaders, and Leaders of Collaboratives,

On March 5, 2021, the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education adopted amendments to the Student Learning Time regulations on an emergency basis. These amendments provide me with the authority to determine when hybrid and remote models will no longer count toward meeting the required student learning time hours. 603 CMR 27.08(2)(d). Consistent with these amendments, and following consultation with medical experts and state health officials, I am exercising that authority as follows:

- **Elementary school phase (grades K-5): For elementary schools**, hybrid and remote learning models will no longer count towards meeting the required student learning time hours as of Monday, April 5, 2021. As a result, districts and schools are required to shift their learning model for elementary school grade levels to full-time, in-person instruction five days per week effective Monday, April 5, 2021.

- **Middle school phase (grades 6-8):** For middle schools, hybrid and remote learning models will no longer count towards meeting the required student learning time hours as of Wednesday, April 28, 2021. As a result, districts and schools will be required to shift their learning model for middle school grade levels to full-time, in-person instruction five days per week, effective Wednesday, April 28, 2021.

- **High school phase (grades 9-12):** We will announce the details and timing of the high school phase of the plan in April. Districts will be provided with at least two weeks in advance of the date for high school students to return to full-time, in-person instruction, but should start making such plans now.

Importantly, families will retain the choice as to whether to send their children to school in-person or have them learn remotely through the end of the school year. Districts may also apply for a waiver from DESE. Waivers will be considered in a limited set of circumstances described later in this document.

These regulations are legally binding. Any district that does not comply with the regulatory requirements or receive a waiver by April 5, 2021 (for the elementary school phase of the plan) will be required to make up any missed structured learning time. This time could be made up during this school year, over the summer, or into next school year if necessary. In addition, G.L. c. 71, § 4A links Chapter 70 funds to structured learning time.