*****Massachusetts Department of***

***Elementary and Secondary Education***

### 75 Pleasant Street, Malden, Massachusetts 02148-4906 Telephone: (781) 338-3000 TTY: N.E.T. Relay 1-800-439-2370

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| Jeffrey C. Riley*Commissioner* |  |

# MEMORANDUM

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| **To:** | Members of the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education |
| **From:**  | Jeffrey C. Riley, Commissioner |
| **Date:**  | February 12, 2021  |
| **Subject:** | School Reopening Update and Proposed Next Steps |

Since our meeting on January 26, the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (Department) has continued to inform districts of new developments related to COVID-19 and to support schools and districts as they move toward bringing more students into classrooms.

This month marks the start of the state’s pooled testing program for K-12 schools. Pooled testing, as announced in January, involves mixing several test samples together in a “batch” or “pool” and then testing the pooled sample with a PCR test for COVID-19. If a pooled test result is negative, then all individuals within that pool are presumed negative and may continue to remain in school. If a pooled test result is positive, then all individuals in the pool must receive a follow-up test and take all necessary precautions. During an initial six-week period for the pooled testing program, participating districts and schools will receive the test kits, support from a testing service provider, and the testing software to track results, all at no cost to them.

As of February 12, 149 districts and schools were signed up to participate, including Boston Public Schools. The list represents more than a quarter of the state’s public school students. Some planned to start the first week of February, and most planned to begin around February 8. The Department will continue accepting applications through the end of the month.

The Department continues to work with schools and districts to address student isolation resulting from the pandemic. On February 1, we published information for districts and schools about relationship mapping. The Department is collaborating with LearnLaunch to offer a [workshop on this topic](https://mailchi.mp/doe.mass.edu/commissioners-weekly-update-2-1-21-board-recap-increasing-fafsa-completion-updated-cvte-early-childhood-guidance#upcominglearn) and is sharing profiles of schools that are using this approach to ensure that every student has a connection to a trusted adult at school.

On February 11, the Department released updated Transportation Guidance. The revisions to the guidance have been made in close consultation with our medical advisors, based on additional data on air exchange rates on buses as well as the continued proven effectiveness of masking. In addition, the Massachusetts Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics has reviewed and endorsed the revised transportation guidance.

I will update the Board further at our February 23 meeting.

Attachments:

* [Pooled Testing FAQ — Updated January 22 and January 29, 2021](https://www.doe.mass.edu/covid19/pooled-testing/pooled-testing-faq.docx) *(download)*
* [Implementing Pooled Testing Strategies Webinar January 29, 2021](https://www.doe.mass.edu/covid19/pooled-testing/implementing-pooled-testing.pptx) *(download)*
* [Remote Learning Practice Profile: Relationship Mapping](https://www.doe.mass.edu/covid19/remote-learning/relationship-mapping.pdf)
* [Transportation Guidance – Updated February 11, 2021](https://www.doe.mass.edu/covid19/on-desktop/2020-0722transport-guide.docx) *(download)*

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