As you might imagine, there is incredible attention on the reopening of schools this fall. This is so from the highest government authority to our next door neighbors. Without question, factors related to the health and safety of students and staff tops an ever-growing list of questions and concerns in a reopening scenario. Since the release of the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) initial guidance on June 25, 2020, district administrators have been hard at work executing related analyses in an effort to build a plan that adheres to the letter of the guidance. What follows is brief summary of the actions and activities related to developing the reopening plan and where we currently stand.

Upon release of the guidance on June 25th, we held a meeting for all principals and directors the following day. With specifics on the guidance, we had clarity in enough areas of the operation to start a deep analysis. All districts/schools are required to submit a report to DESE by July 31st detailing plans for in-person instruction with safety requirements, hybrid learning, and remote learning. Given DESE’s strong emphasis on providing in-person learning for as many students as possible in the fall, building principals were directed to engage a physical distancing analysis in tight accordance with guidance (minimum of 3 feet; recommended 6 feet of physical distancing). Additionally, we have been working closely with the Inspectional Services Department on other facets of the safety plan. This includes but is not limited to building cleaning and sanitizing, air quality and ventilation, and hand sanitizing stations. What is more, we have already been in discussion with food services about safe and viable plans for meals. These plans will take on a more definitive shape as the general framework takes shape.

By way of reminder, our philosophical foundation for work related to reopening this fall remains the same:

1. Establish resources and develop protocols around the hierarchy of need
   a. Physical and mental health of each student
   b. Food security and housing stability
2. Build processes and protocols to establish the most optimal and flexible conditions for and approaches to learning and development for each student

3. Communicate clearly and frequently

As such, the district is marshaling the requisite resources/partnerships around housing and food security and prioritizing the physical and mental health of all students by ensuring the appropriate staffing, supplies and protocols are in place for physical health and providing training and resources relative to mental health. Relative to developing the conditions for optimal learning, we are continuing to develop plans for safe, in-person learning. At this point, I can say definitively that we are developing plans for consistent, in-person instruction for elementary students in the compulsory grades and all students on individualized education plans whose plan calls for a self-contained or sub separate classroom. Given the enrollment and space limitations at the secondary level, creating a scenario where all students are attending at the same time on a given day in a given building in is not possible according to the physical guidelines. Accordingly, secondary teams are working on hybrid model that creates the optimal learning conditions.

It should be noted that we still await guidance on transportation and vocational technical schools. Further, there is not a clear decision on time on learning (for in-person, hybrid, or full remote scenarios) and the requirement of a 180-day school year. Planning will continue to the extent that it can in these areas. We are approaching planning with a flexible mindset, knowing that there will likely be shifts in the coming weeks.

Developing a framework for in-person instruction is one of a number of moving parts related to reopening. In addition to the in-person plan, we are also working on hybrid and full remote learning plans. Safety is our foremost responsibility. While we are carefully considering every detail of providing safe conditions for in-person learning, we are also deeply engaged in crafting a model for teaching and learning. Toward that end, we applied for a support opportunity through the Barr Foundation wherein they identify (and pay for) a team of experts to support the district in an area of our choosing. In our application, we identified a need for support in choosing a universal screener to assess learning and knowledge gaps, prioritize standards, and create a plan and timeline for addressing the gaps. Our application was accepted and we are in the process of evaluating the teams who submitted proposals related to our needs.

Finally, at the June 11th School Committee meeting I announced the launch of Spatial Temporal Math or ST Math, a new enrichment and remediation resource for all elementary students. The LPS elementary students have done us proud with this program. After the first two weeks of use, I received a call from the education representative at the One8 Foundation celebrating the fact that the Lynn student participation was among the highest in the state at that time, noting student participation at Harrington and Ford in particular. Since then, we have received two citations from Commissioner Riley on student participation among those in the classes of Ms. Naples and Ms. Mah, teachers at Shoemaker.