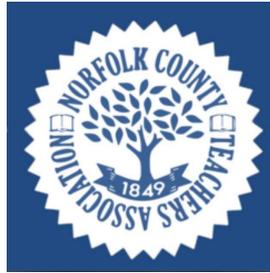


NORFOLK COUNTY TEACHERS ASSOCIATION



www.myncta.org

A Message to Our Communities During the COVID 19 Pandemic

As dedicated educators, there is nothing we want more than to be safely in our classrooms performing the work that we love with our students. This summer, we have been diligently preparing for an eventual return to teaching and learning in whatever form that takes. We have met with local educational leaders, administrators, and worked with colleagues on task forces in order to begin to answer the many questions that challenge us due to the COVID 19 pandemic and its effects on how we perform our professional responsibilities.

During these unprecedented times, our guiding principles have not changed. We want to address academic, social and emotional needs of all students as well as protect the health and safety of our colleagues, families, and the communities we serve. Consequently, we've considered several options for a return to school in the fall and we want you to know that no matter the situation, we are ready to educate, nurture and support our students and their families.

Safety & In-Person Instruction

Understandably, the safety precautions that we would need to implement in order to begin offering in-person classes next month would not foster nor resemble what we consider to be a supportive and welcoming learning environment for our students. For these reasons we believe our schools should not open their doors early in the fall. The reality is that scientists and medical professionals still do not fully understand the coronavirus and each day we learn new information about symptoms, transmission, and the long term effects of this virus. Currently, our schools do not have the physical or financial resources to provide the space, staff, cleaning, ventilation, and PPE needed to create safe environments for teachers or students.

Remote Learning

Our commitment to strengthening remote teaching practices is a targeted focus of our collegial discussions and professional development. Although our classes may be taught from a distance, students will be offered an engaging educational experience with varied instructional approaches and assessments that track student learning outcomes. To be done well, this requires time and collaboration and that is why we are asking for a phased-in approach to starting school this fall.

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A Hybrid Model

When safe to do so, the chance to see our students in smaller groups in person will strengthen the bond between students and teachers as well as allow for opportunities to collaborate with peers in the physical classroom. This would also require creative scheduling, transportation, and the feasibility of solving many of the safety concerns outlined above.

What Are Educators Doing Now?

Educators are meeting with district wide task forces, local administration and the community at large to address the many concerns that come with teaching during this unprecedented time. We are also actively contacting state representatives by supporting the HEROES Act, which would usher in more funding from the federal and state level in order to fulfill the educational needs of our students. This funding includes reinstating positions that were cut this spring, hiring additional support staff, purchasing equipment and safety supplies, funding for child care for young families in need, as well as technology and internet access for all. Educators are also planning to use the first phase of school for professional development, to address the social and emotional needs of our students, build relationships and engage in effective communication with families.

What Can Our Community Members Do to Help?

We are very lucky to work in communities that support us and we acknowledge that these may be difficult and challenging times for families. We simply ask that you do what you've always done: be an ally and a partner in your child's education and acknowledge that only by working together will our students continue to prosper.

What Are We Asking of Our Local Administrations?

We are asking our local administrators to focus on safety first and to advocate for time at the beginning of the school year for professional development that will help us to provide engaging lessons using best practices for remote teaching. We also ask for open, honest and transparent communication so that the focus can be on teaching and learning.

Our Hope for the Future

Ultimately, our goal is to safely carry out our duties as educators. We hope to return to normal school operations as soon as it is safe and practical to do so. In the meantime, we will continue to support our students and teach them with passion and understanding.

NCTA Local Members

Avon, Bellingham, Blue Hills Regional, Braintree, Canton, Dedham, Dover-Sherborn, Foxboro, Franklin, Holbrook, King Philip Regional, Medfield, Millis, Milton, Norfolk, Norwood, Plainville, Randolph, Sharon, Stoughton, Tri-County Regional, Walpole, Westwood, Weymouth, Wrentham

Helpful Links:

[Department of Elementary & Secondary Education Coronavirus Information & Publications](#)
[Massachusetts Teachers Association - Proposals & Phased-In Approach to Reopening Schools](#)
[Centers for Disease Control - Coronavirus & Schools](#)