



City of Brockton
BROCKTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Michael P. Thomas ♦ Superintendent of Schools

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Dear Commissioner Riley,

After a careful review of the feasibility study conducted as part of our August 2020 reopening plan, I am respectfully requesting a waiver that would give the Brockton Public Schools a two-week delay in transitioning our PreK-5 students to full, in-person learning. This waiver request was reviewed and unanimously approved by the Brockton School Committee on Tuesday, March 16.

While our waiver request is logistical in nature, we feel that it is important to detail the unique circumstances of our district. They are as follows:

- The Brockton Public Schools closed on March 12, 2020. Due to a spike in cases late last summer, the district remained fully remote to begin the 2020-2021 school year.
- At one point during the COVID-19 pandemic, the City of Brockton had among the highest daily case counts of any municipality in the Commonwealth.
- The school district began its transition to hybrid learning on February 23 by bringing back students in our sub-separate classrooms. We then phased in each grade level over the last three weeks, ending with grades 11 and 12 last week.
- Students are presently in school for one day each week so that each classroom is at about 25 percent capacity. As part of our phased-in approach, we told families that we would transition to 50 percent capacity after a few weeks of successful implementation.

Fear of being exposed to COVID-19 remains an ongoing and ever-present concern for our residents and that is reflected in our most recent family survey. In a survey conducted on Wednesday, March 17, 25 percent of respondents said they would keep their children home when we switch to in-person learning and another 11 percent said they are not sure what learning model they would choose at this time. It is our hope that many of the families who are undecided would feel more comfortable with the in-person learning model as the daily case count continues to decline.

Each of our buildings serves a large student population which makes providing six feet of space in the cafeterias challenging. Delaying by two weeks would enable the district to procure large tents so that we may hold lunch outdoors. Without using outdoor space, lunch periods would begin the moment students entered the building and end right before the last bell. This would be ill-advised for a variety of reasons and it would create logistical challenges for our Food Services Department.

We would require additional buses to accommodate all students who qualify for transportation. After speaking to our transportation providers, they need additional time to recall drivers. This extension would give them the requisite time to get more drivers back behind the wheel.

Should a waiver be granted, our district would seek to transition PreK-8 students to a 100 percent in-person learning model five days per week on Monday, April 26. We would transition students in our sub-separate classrooms to a 100 percent in-person learning model five days per week on Monday, April 5, as we feel that we currently possess the requisite infrastructure for that small population of students. Once our PreK-8 students transition to in-person learning, we would reconfigure our classrooms to allow for three feet of space between students. We have shared DESE's findings regarding the difference between three feet and six feet with our families in hopes that they understand that this shift is supported by scientific data.

As previously mentioned, the Brockton Public Schools are currently operating at 25 percent capacity each day which means students are in school one day per week. Beginning April 5, we would transition to 50 percent capacity so that students, including Brockton High School students, would be in school for up to three days per week. Our two cohorts, Orange Group and Green Group, would be in school for the same two days each week and would also be in school on alternating Mondays.

We hope that this request reflects the time and consideration we put into our proposal. I have enclosed a copy of the PowerPoint that I presented to the School Committee on Tuesday, March 16, which further demonstrates our rationale for this waiver. If you have any questions, please contact me.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,
Michael P. Thomas
Superintendent of Schools