

## A. Executive summary

Dearborn Academy, a therapeutic, private 766 school for 50-60 students in Grades 3-12 is located in Newton, Mass., and occupies a very large school building. We are able to safely include all students for in-person instruction at the same time, should students and staff consistently follow the recommended health and safety protocols -- wearing masks and keeping physically distant being the most important among them. Many of our students have sensory sensitivities and/or challenges resulting from conditions like asthma. A few of our students have hearing impairments. Most of our students suffer from anxiety. Some have nonverbal learning disabilities. All of those conditions impact our students' ability to wear masks for 6.25 hours per day -- even with mask breaks. In order to support a transition back to full time, in-person instruction, we have decided to begin the year with a hybrid model that brings students to the building four mornings a week. The reduced time in the building will give students time to acclimate to long periods of mask wearing and to the other protocols that will feel new and strange. Once acclimated, and assuming rates of infection stay steady or decline, we will consider how we might safely transition to a full time in-person instructional model. We know from some of our families that even when we provide in-person instruction via hybrid or full time models that they will keep their student home. We will use technology -- including microphones and livestreaming -- to include students who are home into the classrooms. When students are learning from home they will receive synchronous and asynchronous instruction. Being a therapeutic school, we naturally pay a lot of attention to how we support our students emotionally at the beginning of the school year and at each big change or transition -- expected or unexpected. We are well positioned to apply our skills to support students who have suffered from trauma as they return to school (in whatever capacity) this fall.

### **Decision- making PROCESS for hybrid model design:**

A volunteer group of staff formed two working groups: the Operations Working Group (OWG) and the Teaching and Service Provision Working Group (TWG) to plan for the beginning of the new school year. The groups have been meeting twice a week since the week of 7/6/2020. Early on members of the groups created a list of questions and issues to be addressed and shared it with the entire Dearborn staff to include input from all employees. Those questions served to guide the working group's agendas.

The first goal of the groups was to study various hybrid models proposed by other schools and districts and consider the pros and cons for implementation in our setting. The groups narrowed the choices to two and sent them to caregivers on 7/17/2020 to solicit written feedback. On 7/22/2020 the leadership team, with support from a clinician, met with eight caregivers who attended the Zoom meeting set up to seek further feedback from families.

The response from families regarding the plans, shared both in writing and in the meeting, showed a strong preference for the following model:

**All students will attend school in-person on Mondays, Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Fridays from 8:15-11:30 a.m., with remote learning in the afternoon. All students will do remote learning on Wednesdays 8:15am until 12:45pm.**

**DECISION:**

The most common request from caregivers was to increase the amount of time in school on Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Friday. After considering the number of students likely to return to in-person learning and the space we have in our building to facilitate physical distancing, on 7/31/2020 we proposed the following hybrid model to DESE with an adjustment for increased in-person time (change highlighted):

**All students will attend school in-person on Mondays, Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Fridays from 8:15-12pm, with remote learning in the afternoon. All students will do remote learning on Wednesdays 8:15am until 12:45pm.**

In order to practice new routines with fewer students in the building, we will welcome students back to school with the following modified first week:

9/8/2020 ONLY students in Grades 3-8 will come to school from 8:15am-12pm. No remote learning will be provided after 12pm.

Between 9am-12pm, high school students will be checking in individually with each service provider on their team.

9/9/2020 ONLY students in grades 9-12 will come to school from 8:15am-12pm. No remote learning will be provided after 12pm.

Between 9am-12pm, students in grades 3-8 will be checking in individually with each service provider on their team.

9/10/2020 Barring any adjustments that need to be made with regards to timeline or model based on the experience of the first two days back in school, all students choosing to come to the building for in-person instruction will attend school from 8:15am-12pm. On 9/10/2020 and 9/11/2020 no remote learning will be provided after 12pm.

9/14/2020 Barring any additional adjustments that need to be made with regards to timeline or model based on the experience of the first week back to school, all students choosing to come to the building for in-person instruction will attend per the hybrid model, below:

**All students will attend school in-person on Mondays, Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Fridays from 8:15-12pm, with remote learning in the afternoon. All students will do remote learning on Wednesdays 8:15am until 12:45pm.**

Our goal is to start our regular school year schedule (full days M, Tu, Th, F and early release W) on 10/1/2020 after the transition period described above.

Whether students learn remotely or at the school building, we will continue to provide all services on the IEPs.

**ADDITIONAL INFO:**

Staff will be available to students and families during work hours, with their highest priority being the health and safety of our students and themselves. This may mean delays in response time for students who are learning remotely. We will do our best to meet every student and family's needs in a timely manner during the hours of 8:00am-3:30pm. Each clinician will ensure that families know how to access emergency services at any time, and especially during the hours when our team is not working.

As of 7/23/2020, 62% of caregivers completed a survey sent on 7/15/2020 asking families to share their current thinking with regards to sending their student to school this fall. Of the 62% who answered:

- 59% plan to send their student to school
- 10% do not plan to send their student to school
- 31% "might" send their student to school

**B. Letter from the superintendent to the community, including the district's selection for the reopening model it will use to begin the school year.**

Dear Dearborn Families,

I hope this email finds you well, all things considered. If you've had the time and/or inclination to follow local news you've learned that a number of public schools are announcing their plans for the fall: Somerville will be all remote; Cambridge planning in- person instruction for students in grades PK-3 and those in substantially separate classes with remote for everyone else; Framingham starting remote; Boston still deciding whether to start all remote or with a hybrid of in- person and remote instruction. Some private schools are starting remotely, others with a hybrid model, and some are planning to return all students to full school days. No school leaders think their plans are ideal, and none pleases every school staff member, caregiver or student.

Via survey, Zoom meetings, emails and individual calls, many of you have expressed fear for your student and family, and do not plan to send your student to the school building this fall. Many others shared your hope to get your student back to Dearborn full days, each day, as soon as possible. Still others prefer a hybrid model.

I have been on countless calls with my private and public school colleagues, watched my own hometown's school committee meetings, viewed webinars organized by school leaders in other countries who have opened their schools, worked with our staff, our pediatrician and nurse

practitioner, and solicited feedback from you to draft plans for the fall that aim to put the health and safety of the Dearborn community first.

We are so eager to see our students in person again. At the same time, we worry that the expectations that we have to have -- that students wear masks at all times except for mask breaks; face forward in rows during instruction; leave the classroom to be seen by the nurse if they exhibit any of the symptoms on the COVID checklist (which include fatigue!); adjust to having different staff helping them should their classroom teachers need to be home themselves, etc. -- will make it challenging for students to relax into learning and connect to school. At Dearborn we are so skilled at creating a welcoming environment that puts students at ease -- which is the only way they can learn new things -- and we are concerned about the barriers to creating this environment during this pandemic. We also know that many of our students have struggled to access remote learning opportunities and to access the opportunities for socializing that we have created since the school building closed in March.

Our plan, as it now stands, is to begin the school with a hybrid model, presented in the chart below. We will work to provide high quality instruction and services to students who will be in the building with us, and those that remain home choosing or requiring remote instruction.<sup>1</sup> We know that we may need to shift to all- remote instruction at any time.

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<sup>1</sup>ALL students can access remote learning and DO NOT require a medical note to do so.

| Date            | Plan for EMS (students in Grades 3-8)   | Plan for HS (students in Grades 9-12)   |
|-----------------|---|---|
| Tuesday, 9/8    | Remote 9am-12pm<br>NO students in the building  | Remote 9am-12pm<br>NO students in the building  |
| Wednesday, 9/9  | Remote 9am-12pm<br>NO students in the building  | Remote 9am-12pm<br>NO students in the building  |
| Thursday, 9/10  | Come to school 8:15am-12pm<br>No remote in the afternoon  | Remote 9am-12pm<br>NO HS students in the building   |
| Friday, 9/11    | Remote 9am-12pm<br>NO EMS students in the building  | Come to school 8:15am-12pm<br>No remote in the afternoon  |
| Monday, 9/14    | Come to school 8:15am-12pm<br>Students access independent activities from home in the afternoon | Come to school 8:15am-12pm<br>Students access independent activities from home in the afternoon |
| Tuesday, 9/15   | Come to school 8:15am-12pm<br>Students access independent activities from home in the afternoon | Come to school 8:15am-12pm<br>Students access independent activities from home in the afternoon |
| Wednesday, 9/16 | Remote only 8:15am-12:45pm  | Remote only 8:15am-12:45pm  |
| Thursday, 9/17  | Come to school 8:15am-12pm<br>Remote instruction and independent activities in the afternoon    | Come to school 8:15am-12pm<br>Remote instruction and independent activities in the afternoon    |
| Friday, 9/18    | Come to school 8:15am-12pm<br>Remote instruction and independent activities in the afternoon    | Come to school 8:15am-12pm<br>Remote instruction and independent activities in the afternoon    |

Starting on 9/17/20 all students choosing to come to the building for in- person instruction will attend per the hybrid model, below:

**All students will attend school in-person on Mondays, Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Fridays from 8:15-12pm, with classes and services provided remotely (a mix of staff directed and independent work) in the afternoon.**

**All students will do remote learning on Wednesdays 8:15am until 12:45pm.**

We need your help to pull this off. Specifically, for all students who will come to the school building this fall, please have them:

1. Start wearing masks at home (covering mouth and nose) for 3.5 hours each day, with two 10-minute breaks.
2. Practice safely putting on and taking off a mask (see/share this guidance):  
<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/how-to-wear-cloth-face-coverings.html> (English)  
<https://espanol.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/how-to-wear-cloth-face-coverings.html> (Spanish)
3. Practice washing their hands (see/share this video for guidance):  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fpXh2XHwMmE> (English)  
[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QYwW\\_7qCep0](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QYwW_7qCep0) (Spanish)
4. Roleplay physical distancing: staying 6+ feet away from someone, pausing to let others pass and communicating clearly when necessary when necessary to navigate a tight space.

I will share more information as we get closer to the start of school regarding:

1. The daily attestation families will need to complete to share that students coming to the school building have passed a screening at home each morning and show no COVID symptoms. We are testing apps for this now.
2. How to pick up a thermometer from the school building if you have requested one in order to complete the daily screening.
3. Our protocols for following recommended health and safety guidelines.
4. The number of masks that we recommend you send in with your students each day.
5. How we will be serving breakfast and lunch during the hybrid model.
6. Social activities, Caregiver Advisory Committee (CAC) meetings, on-going support groups, and information sessions that we are organizing for caregivers this fall.
7. The names and contact information for your student's team members.
8. Remote instruction: both for students who will be accessing remotely all day, and for those that will be spending some time learning in the school building and some time learning at home.

Enrollment packets will be mailed to your home later this month. Please fill them out completely and return them as soon as you can so that we are prepared to support your student this fall.

Please contact the transportation company that your district uses if you have any questions about transportation.

Please keep in touch. I miss seeing your students, and you.

Warmly,



Rebecca Altepeter  
Head of School

**Feel free to join me and other members of the team on Monday, 8/10 at 4pm to ask questions about the reopening of school this fall. Use this Zoom link:**

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/4389551031?pwd=czF0cklhZW54SDcwaWoyQmcxWHhZdz09>

Meeting ID: 438 955 1031

Passcode: 990619

**C. In-person learning model:**

Dearborn Academy's full time, in- person instructional model works like the hybrid model, with more time in the building and lunch served in- person. In our hybrid model, all students can come to the school building for in- person instruction at the same time. Given our small student body and large school building, we are able to exceed the minimum requirement that student desks be arranged forward- facing, three feet apart. Students will follow the same protocols for lunch that they do for breakfast. Some students will continue to learn at home, and access teacher- led instruction along with their classmates who are in the school building using technology.

**D. Hybrid learning model:**

All students choosing/able to attend school in the building will attend school in-person on Mondays, Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Fridays from 8:15-12pm, with classes and services provided remotely (a mix of staff directed and independent work) in the afternoon.

**E. Remote learning model:**

In the remote learning model each student's attendance is taken during homeroom/advisory in the morning and for each class period. Staff members will continue to track both attendance and participation using our remote learning logs. Academic work will align to the state standards, and students will receive Passing/Incomplete grades. Each student's clinician will continue to act as case manager and be responsible for contacting the family via Zoom or phone call each week, at a minimum. Teachers will join the calls as warranted. We will continue to call upon our Spanish teacher and Spanish- speaking administrative assistant to

provide translation and interpretation as needed. The head of school will continue to send frequent correspondence to caregivers (in English and Spanish) via email, and we will continue to offer a weekly caregiver support group.

Dearborn Academy will continue to use Google Classroom, Meet and Zoom to connect with students and families remotely. Each student will be provided a Chromebook. Our staffing model will not deviate from our approved staffing pattern, with approved ratios of Elementary/Middle School 8:1:1 and High School 12:1:1 (students: special educator: assistant teacher). We will continue to employ specialized curricula such as the Wilson Reading System for students with learning disabilities; SMARTS for students with executive functioning challenges; and EmPOWER to support students with writing. We will continue to use curricula that meet the power standards of the Curriculum Frameworks for all subject areas. Students receive all of their IEP services in the remote learning environment.

**F. Out-of-school time plan:**

Dearborn Academy does not provide before or after school programming during non- pandemic times, and will not during this pandemic. Students who attend Dearborn come from all over the Commonwealth and access out of school time activities in their home communities. Our team will continue to work with families and our public school district partners to help coordinate activities and ensure access to those opportunities for our students.

**G. Student supports and professional learning:**

As a therapeutic 766 approved private school, Dearborn Academy is designed to provide high quality, trauma-informed care to all students. Since the school building closed in March our clinicians have reached out to students via videoconference, Google platform, social media, email and phone call to connect with each student individually at least twice weekly. They have also joined remote classes to observe and support students. Our principal, who is an LICSW, partnered with one of our LMHCs to offer a weekly caregiver support group. Each of our SLPs, OT, guidance counselor and reading specialists maintained services while school was out, and will provide services in person and/or remotely per the frequency on the IEPs. Our school calendar includes one orientation day for new staff only (8/28) and four PD days for all staff (8/31-9/3). School begins for students on 9/8. Students will continue to be assessed at the beginning of the year and the end of the year using a variety of tools, including AIMSWEB. Students who are due for three- year evaluations will be assessed in person and/or remotely, as the context allows.

**H. Other: Information in this section should be determined by the context of the district.**

High school students were invited to, and eight participated in, a Zoom meeting to review the hybrid plan and ask questions from members of the leadership and teaching teams on August 12th. They were offered space to bring ideas and suggestions, also.

**I. Certification of health and safety requirements:**



Dearborn Academy certifies that we meet the final health and safety requirements issued by DESE.