

FRANCIS W. PARKER CHARTER ESSENTIAL SCHOOL
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Members of the Parker Community,

I appreciate the time, thoughtfulness, and curiosity so many of you have invested in our planning for the new school year. It was great to see so many folks at the Virtual Town Halls, for example, and to have such strong participation in community surveys this summer!

I also want to recognize the incredible work done this summer by four groups of staff: the Instructional Leadership Team, which Deb Merriam chairs; the Faculty Working Group, teachers who volunteered to help develop plans; the Campus Reopening Working Group, which has focused on facilities and operations; and the Tech Team, a standing committee pre-COVID that has focused this summer on rolling out the 1:1 device program.

As I said in the Town Halls, whatever model we choose, it's not just about getting it done. It's also about what we're trying to do: we should be true to our mission and a twenty-five year legacy of pedagogy and practice; we should prioritize relationships, community, and connection; we should personalize the experience, focusing on our most vulnerable students and those new to the school; we should design for resilience and flexibility in the face of so many unknowns, building in as much continuity and consistency as we can.

If we're to be true to the Ten Common Principles in this difficult and complex moment, in the end, the voices of the faculty and staff are privileged. Quoting here from Common Principle #4:

“...decisions about the details of the course of study, the use of students’ and teachers’ time and the choice of teaching materials and specific pedagogies must be unreservedly placed in the hands of the principal and staff.”

Our surveys and town halls show strong support among our families for the hybrid model, and we hope to build toward that in the weeks and months ahead. What's currently true is that faculty and staff (in sufficient numbers) are not ready to commit to a hybrid approach: in addition to health and safety concerns (which are significant), teachers are worried about being able to deliver a high-quality Parker education with fidelity in a physically distanced classroom. As I said above, it's not just about getting it done, it's also about what we're trying to do. As a group the teachers are more open to being outside with students and families (observing the appropriate protocols) throughout the fall; some teachers are willing to work inside the buildings and we may pilot some synchronous, cohort-based, opportunities to do school from a Parker classroom this fall. The hope is that over time community confidence—which understandably tracks inversely with regional infection rates—will improve over time.

Accordingly, the plans Parker will submit to DESE on Friday emphasize a “Remote Plus” approach to reopening. We have reason to be confident in this choice of direction: last spring we pivoted on a dime in reaction to circumstances and, still, Home Learning—while far from perfect—was pretty successful; 95% of students who were on track to Gateway in March did so by June. By “doubling

down” on remote learning we can use what we learned last spring to build a more robust and resilient model.

The following graphic provides a thumbnail of what we mean by “Remote Plus.”

Remote Plus At-A-Glance		
Robust Remote Learning Model	Groundwork for Pivot to Hybrid Model	On-Campus Learning and Activities
<p>“Here Now” consistent daily schedule of classes. Mix of synchronous and asynchronous learning opportunities. Accountability for attendance and work production. Weekly communication to families about student progress. Enhanced collaboration tools. 1:1 school-issued laptop program. Office hours to meet with teachers during the school week.</p>	<p>Form cohorts as part of building the master schedule and student groupings so that students can maintain consistency of class experience if and when campus classes are possible.</p>	<p>In-person learning for high needs students (remote lessons/classes/activities accessed from school, with adult support). Orientation and advisory activities, with special emphasis on new students and families. “By Appointment” (largely outdoors) opportunities to do science labs, class simulations, office hours, or other learning activities that cannot be as effectively done in the remote setting.</p>

Be safe and well,

Todd.

12 August 2020