



KENNETH N. SALIM, Ed.D.  
Superintendent of Schools  
Cambridge Public Schools



SUMBUL SIDDIQUI, Esq.  
Mayor  
City of Cambridge

January 22, 2021

Dear CPS Community,

We are disappointed to learn that the Cambridge Education Association has chosen to declare it has no confidence in the Superintendent and the Cambridge School Committee. Unfortunately, this is a strategy of division we have seen unions employ in other school districts in Massachusetts during the pandemic. Despite this action, our goal will continue to be expanding in-person learning opportunities for our scholars, while keeping all of our staff safe.

We acknowledge that our educators are facing unprecedented challenges supporting students and families, whether they are teaching remotely or in-person. We know that many educators are concerned and have worries about the risks associated with COVID-19.

Throughout this pandemic, the Cambridge Public Schools has prioritized the health and safety of every staff member and every student. We have listened to our public health, scientific, and medical experts and updated our approach as we have learned more about COVID-19. Superintendent Salim has met regularly with union leader Dan Monahan, to hear teachers' concerns and discuss possible solutions. Conversations with educators through various working groups, educator informational sessions and general educator feedback have all guided our decisions. As a result of this feedback, our plans to expand in-person learning have evolved.

We postponed the in-person expansion date to March 1 to give teachers more time to prepare and added two full planning days to their calendars for school-based work. We are supporting school-based decision making around teaching models based on staffing, enrollment, and other details specific to each school. We continue to improve our safety and health procedures with feedback from staff. The working group that helped to develop the health and safety manual that guides the district includes three members of the educators' union.

Ultimately, we have to decide what is best for the entire school district - even as we recognize that some people will disagree. We know how much students and families are struggling through the pandemic. We know that school building closures have led to tremendous setbacks in our students' emotional, physical, and academic wellbeing. We know that schools need to and can be a safe environment for all.

We have invested over \$5 million in [safety measures](#) to protect students and staff in our schools, many of which are not available in districts across the state and country that are offering in-person learning. This includes voluntary, free, biweekly individual COVID testing for all in-person staff; testing of symptomatic in-person students and staff; ventilation improvements; an abundance of PPE, including high-quality masks independently tested for filtration effectiveness; enhanced cleaning procedures; additional health aides; robust protocols, outlined in our Safety, Health, and Facilities [manual](#); and a partnership with the Cambridge Public Health Department to implement strong quarantine and contact tracing procedures. In addition, planning for student surveillance testing is underway.

In the midst of extraordinary circumstances, our work has been guided by a deep respect for the entire CPS community and the shared goals of excellence and equity as we serve our children and families. We will continue this work over the next few months and look forward to a time when all our students are back where they belong - in the classroom.

Sincerely,

Kenneth N. Salim, Ed.D.  
Superintendent

Mayor Sumbul Siddiqui, Esq.  
City of Cambridge