



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE 08/11/2020

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Statement

Mayor Yvonne M. Spicer: Safety First - Reopening of Framingham Public Schools

Framingham, MA - This Summer, I've spent countless hours listening to testimony and reading draft plans and emails presented by school leadership, teachers, and parents. Also, along with state leaders at the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, and state, and local public health professionals, I've helped analyze data to inform our school reopening plan. There's a lot to unpack in the pursuit of making the best possible and safest decisions for the City of Framingham and its students.

In all that I have observed, and with the subtle nuances that must be considered that come with reopening in these unprecedented times, there is no perfect solution. For example, the challenges of social distancing, sanitation, transportation, and food service are integral parts of the delivery of a quality educational experience, which is the primary objective.

Our focus should be on the business of teaching and learning. What are the outcomes we need to have for Framingham's children? What are the resources that teachers need, as well as our families? And how prepared are we to pivot to remote learning in our district? How are we serving our most vulnerable populations? One part of the reopening plan that I wholeheartedly agree with is that teachers will be given more time for professional development to prepare for remote learning because this will help provide a quality educational experience. I'm pleased the critical conversations are continuing with the teachers' unions and the school administration, and I am hopeful for an equitable resolution.

As a former teacher and administrator of Framingham Public Schools, I'm well-versed in the importance of setting a positive tone at the beginning of the school year in the dynamics within each school. I have worked with some phenomenal educators who know how to swivel on a dime with instructional practices and strategies. We are still navigating the pandemic and must continue to rethink teaching and learning, and how we deliver it. While we sort through learning options - remote, hybrid, or in school, the overarching theme should be the health and safety of our students, teachers, and staff.

Another factor that we must consider as we move forward with outlining the plan for schools is the ability to have appropriate child care. I've received several letters from parents who are concerned about this.

Just as I have had made challenging decisions regarding the City, backed by science, state guidelines, and the feedback of our leadership team, to maintain the highest quality of service to Framingham while establishing protocols and procedures to protect the health and safety of residents and employees, the Framingham Public Schools also must do the same.