



**Expectations for Fall Reopening Plan:
DESE Submission
Boston Higashi School
August 10, 2020**

A. Executive Summary

- On Tuesday, September 8th, Boston Higashi School (BHS) will begin its reopening plan for the 2020-2021 school year. Most students will be learning in-person and on-campus due to our student population's entirety meeting the DESE criteria to be designated as High Needs learners (diagnoses along the continuum of Autism Spectrum Disorders).
- We anticipate that a small subset of students will remain at home and participate in learning remotely due to extenuating circumstances, such as personal health conditions, high-risk household members, or parental preference.
- Remote students will participate in a combination of synchronous (real-time) and asynchronous learning experiences during which attendance will be taken and student coursework/engagement will be assessed.
- BHS will continue to make ongoing programmatic model determinations (i.e., in-person, hybrid, full remote) in accordance with public health data, guidance from DESE and other state agencies, and the feasibility of facilities and staff with health and safety as a priority.

Rationale for in-person learning model

- Given their pervasive and intensive needs, our students do best with specialized instruction provided by special education professionals trained in autism within our consistent, highly structured school environment. We would continue remote learning or a hybrid model for any student requesting/requiring it. We anticipate this would be a small subset of our enrollment.
- Due to the small class sizes, we can maintain 3-6 feet between students in each cohort for classroom and special subject activities.
- We believe the additional benefits of a fully in-person program include:
 - Consistency of schedule, routine, staffing, and classroom environment
 - Access to a small group learning model, which is integral to the methodology of Daily Life Therapy®
 - The ability for hands-on instruction when safe and/or necessary to the activity
 - Better opportunities for assessment by in-person staff
 - Better ability to meet the accommodations as outlined in each students' IEP
- In examining the hybrid learning model, it became clear that a rotating schedule (e.g., two days in person, three days remote) would not meet our population's needs due to both their intensive learning needs and their reliance on routine and consistency of schedule.
 - Additionally, coordinating such a model would elicit transportation burdens on already overtaxed districts, vendors, and parents.
 - We would fully support a parent's desire for such hybrid instruction if it were most appropriate for their child, but we strongly recommend the consistency of either the full in-person or full-remote model for our students.
- While we believe we had a successful launch of our "Higashi at Home" remote learning offerings in the spring, and plan to increase the synchronous and asynchronous offerings for remote students this year, we feel that in-person instruction better meets the needs of our student population.

B. Letter from the Superintendent

“CHALLENGE, BELIEVE, TOGETHER”

As we begin the new 2020-2021 academic year, now more than ever we find that our school motto is our ever-present guiding light. It encourages and inspires us to rise to be our best selves no matter what circumstances confront us at any moment in time. COVID-19 *challenges* us all in so many ways both personally and professionally. We *believe* that we have what it takes to continue to educate our students across all domains of learning. Working *together* in a strong partnership will bring about the best for everyone.

Our overarching goal remains steadfast: to enact the mission of our school so that all ‘*our students can learn and reach their true potential in a safe and nurturing environment.*’ The leadership team has worked diligently to prepare our staff and our school environment to meet the demands this pandemic requires. The “new normal” has become the “new necessary.”

These COVID-19 policies and procedures are reflective of the most current guidance and advisories from multiple governmental agencies at both state and federal levels. They are presented in this document to all members of the Higashi learning community in order to provide clarity and counsel. In truth, many of these policies and protocols are already implemented and have been in full practice, as the residential program never closed and our day program reopened the week of July 6, 2020. We also offered summer programming during the scheduled vacation times.

All of our students at Boston Higashi School are considered “high needs” learners, hence the chosen model of instruction is in-person learning. For those students who cannot return or must leave campus, we will offer synchronous and asynchronous remote learning opportunities.

In closing, please be assured that we greet September with sustained and unwavering hope. Our brand of hope is more than just a wish for success. It is an active hope fueled by a thoughtful and informed action plan implemented with fidelity and integrity.

With care,



Deborah Donovan
Principal

C. In-Person Learning Model

Boston Higashi School has made appropriate modifications to address the health and safety requirements issued by DESE, including the creation of student cohorts, modifications to scheduling and class locations, increased facility cleaning and sanitization, and revised health and safety protocols. For detailed information regarding Boston Higashi School's protocols, please see the [Covid-19 Policies and Procedures for an In-Person Learning Model](#) available on our website.

D. Hybrid Learning Model

In examining the hybrid learning option, it became clear that a rotating schedule (e.g. two days in person, three days remote) would not meet the needs of our population due to both their intensive learning needs and their reliance on routine and consistency of schedule. Additionally, coordinating such a model would elicit transportation burdens on already overtaxed districts and parents. Any hybrid learning model adopted for a student would need to be assessed on a case-by-case basis due to their unique learning needs and accommodations. Considerations in creating a hybrid learning model for a student would include, but are not limited to, transportation, support for scheduling changes, and appropriate cohort assignment to minimize the spread of COVID-19. As such, we would fully support a parent's desire for such hybrid instruction if it were most appropriate for their child, but we strongly recommend either the full in-person or full-remote model for our students.

E. Remote Learning Model

This spring's remote learning resources included 3-5 daily livestreamed lessons, leveled homework packets sent bi-weekly via mail, and a robust "Higashi at Home" website, which provided 3+ hours of asynchronous, multi-subject content daily. Although our spring offerings were plentiful, expectations for "Remote Learning 2.0" in the coming year will increase for both student participation and parent engagement. The new policies for "Remote Learning 2.0" are outlined in the subsequent sections.

Our transition to fully remote learning in the fall would include the addition of supplemental content platforms (e.g. Splash Learn, RAZ kids, etc) for asynchronous delivery of leveled "core subject" content. Additionally, the livestreamed, synchronous lessons would be differentiated by skill level / age, instead of by classroom, providing more opportunities for focused practice, feedback, and growth. Weekly thematic calendars will be created and shared by each division, allowing the same content areas to be taught to both learners at home and those remaining on campus in our Residential Program. Additional check-ins with parents, specifically around technology usage and troubleshooting, would increase accessibility for parents and accountability for students. Training for staff regarding new technology platforms, content creation, and remote assessment will be part of the comprehensive professional development staff training for 2020-21 academic year.

Attendance / Participation Tracking

Student attendance to synchronous livestream lessons is tracked by teaching staff and entered into the Boston Higashi School Remote Contact Tracker. The Remote Contact Tracker tallies each student's rate of attendance, as well as any livestream classes offered to the student, their class, and their division. Student engagement during livestream lessons is assessed through teacher and caregiver observation.

Boston Higashi School will utilize a number of content platforms for asynchronous remote learning, such as Splashlearn, Khan Academy, Boomcards, and more. These content platforms record student attendance in the form of dated log-ins and activity completion. Student progress is also assessed through completed and scored activities. These built-in assessments guide teachers and clinicians in assigning work appropriate for the student's skill level.

Teachers, case managers, and clinicians maintain consistent communication with students and their caregivers to assess student engagement and progress through anecdotal accounts. Formalized surveys are sent to caregivers to gain information on student progress toward IEP objectives while fully remote.

While paper-based worksheets are not graded during standard program operations, student worksheets and homework assignments may be reviewed with teaching staff as a means of demonstrating progress toward individual goals and objectives.

Alignment of Work to State Standards / Policy for Issuing Grades

Our curriculum is designed in alignment with the Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks, and content is based on key grade-level concepts "spiraled back" to an appropriate level and differentiated for individual student engagement and learning. Boston Higashi School does not issue grades, rather, assessments of progress are made in accordance with the student's IEP goals and objectives, and communicated via progress reports 3-4 times throughout the IEP cycle in accordance with the student's district requirements.

Remote learning offerings will align with both the state standards and strands required for the MCAS / MCAS-Alt portfolio at a student's grade level (with content adjusted to the student's ability), and will also maintain full service delivery under the student's IEP.

Communication with Parents / Guardians

Frequent, clear, and documented communication with parents during periods of remote learning is of the utmost importance. During the spring, teachers and case managers made contact with parents bi-weekly to offer support and assess student engagement. Based on the needs and

preferences of individual students and their caregivers, teachers and case managers adjusted the frequency of communication attempts. Teachers and case managers are always available to respond to caregivers who call or email in between scheduled contact attempts. Additional check-ins with parents, specifically around technology usage and troubleshooting, will increase accessibility for parents and accountability for students in the next phase of remote learning.

We work in tandem with our school districts to meet interpretation and translation needs that may arise. Our case managers work closely with all families to facilitate inter-agency referrals and direct assistance for families in need.

Technology Platforms

LMS Platform (alternative) - GoogleSite: "Higashi at Home" Webpage

Although the use of a traditional LMS (i.e. GoogleClassroom) was considered, after careful consideration we determined that the level of technological proficiency required was beyond the scope of the majority of our students and their caregivers. With nearly 80% of our students testing at the emergent reader level, systems that required large amounts of reading to navigate would become a barrier to instruction, and ease of use must be paramount. Therefore, a more streamlined and straightforward method for distributing schedules and learning opportunities is preferred. This will include continued use of the public "Higashi at Home" webpage, with which most of our students and families are now familiar. New additions to the webpage will include links to various individualized content platforms and weekly division schedules listing synchronous and asynchronous learning opportunities. To protect the privacy of synchronous class sessions via GoogleMeet, lesson links will be delivered exclusively to caregivers via email.

Collaboration Tools (for staff and parents)

The Boston Higashi School utilizes the Google for Education suite for collaboration purposes, both during remote learning and throughout regular programmatic operations.

- Face-to-face communication: Google Meet is used for meetings between staff and lessons during synchronous livestream opportunities.
- Communication via message / text: The case management team texts with students' parents and guardians in accordance with their own self-identified preferences. Instant messaging is also available during livestream lessons as part of the Google Meet platform. Boston Higashi School staff have access to in-network messaging via Google Chat / Hangouts.
- Document collaboration: Google Docs (i.e. Docs, Slides, Sheets) is used for lesson planning and development, collaboration of schedules and content between staff, and the sharing of lesson and schedule materials with students and their families.
- File-sharing: Google Drive hosts and coordinates file sharing between staff, students, and families.
- Calendar sharing: Google Meet opportunities are created and shared through GoogleCal.

Content Platforms

For Remote Learning 2.0, various content platforms will be utilized for asynchronous, differentiated learning for “core subjects.” Many of these programs offer assessment components and / or engagement tracking metrics. They will be chosen based on students’ needs / level, and may include, but are not limited to, the following:

- English Language Arts
 - Epic!, RAZ-kids, Newsela, Scholastic
- Math
 - Splash Learn, Happy Numbers
- Multi-subject
 - Boom Cards, Khan Academy / Khan Academy Kids, Education.com, BrainPOP

Single sign-on platform:

The use of a single sign-on platform, much like our exploration of an LMS, currently exceeds our present needs regarding complexity and scope. Due to our small population of students and our understanding of each family's set of unique needs, at present we are guiding parents to log into their child’s small number of individualized programs independently. Should our content platforms increase in number / complexity in the future, the use of a single sign-on platform may be reassessed.

Training and Support

A full-remote model of instruction presents new areas of need for training of both staff and caregivers. To provide our students with the most support possible, Boston Higashi School has expanded our already robust training topics to include the following:

For Staff	For Parents / Guardians
<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Staff training and onboarding of software products during weekly curriculum meetings and professional development times.- Video tutorials on usage of platforms / software available on our Teacher Resource intranet page- Training to identify and support increased stress or reduced engagement in students when remote.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Video tutorials on usage of platforms / software available on our Higashi at Home website- 1:1 training opportunities for specific troubleshooting available upon request- Low-tech / alternative platform options available for activities upon request

Technology System Coordination

The Boston Higashi School Technology Department manages all devices, software, hardware, and security protocols in the following areas:

Device management

- Devices for staff and a limited number of students (based on need) are monitored and inventoried after a Technology Lending Agreement is completed by the borrower.
- After a parent survey during spring remote learning, none of our parents self-identified (via survey or follow-up communication with case management) as having constraints regarding internet access.
- Should the need arise, we can coordinate with families and school districts to provide necessary infrastructure and/or devices to allow full access to the remote learning curriculum.
- Six devices (iPads) were lent to families in the spring session of remote learning.
- Devices lent to families are managed via Jamf to control application downloads.

Security compliance

- All technology platforms and tools within our network comply with the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) and the federal Children's Online Privacy Protection Act (COPPA).

Technology support

- Please see the Training and Support table above for additional information regarding staff and caregiver training offerings.
- Higashi's Teacher Resource intranet page includes video tutorials, product / process manuals, and "tips and tricks" shared files for staff peer-training and product usage.
- We recently upgraded to G-Suite Enterprise for improved back-end security features, including Google Meet
- We will be purchasing:
 - enterprise-level Zoho Assist, a cloud-based remote support and remote access software, for troubleshooting of offsite devices
 - seven Zoom Pro accounts to avoid timeouts and increase security (where using a Google Meet may not be possible)

Progress monitoring

Frequent reassessment of our chosen platforms, software, and delivery of services is gathered via parent surveys, 1:1 interviews by case management, and staff feedback during weekly check-in meetings.

Staffing Model

- Remote Learning 2.0 will closely mimic the in-person schedules with which students are familiar, including morning exercise, Basic Study, frequent movement breaks, and academic content.
- Classes will be taught by familiar teachers, master teachers, or clinical team members whenever possible to allow for better student engagement and assessment, as well as familiarity with student IEP goals / objectives.
- When not taught by the student's typically assigned teachers, classes will be taught by staff familiar with the student's age / grade level (i.e. a teacher who usually teaches at the elementary level will not be asked to cover a high school class, regardless of the skill level of the high school student).

Curriculum / Instructional Materials

- The remote school day will meet the current time requirements for various grade levels as put forth by DESE through a combination of:
 - synchronous livestream lessons
 - 1:1 check-ins with teachers, clinicians, and case managers
 - asynchronous recorded lessons
 - differentiated assignments in individualized content platforms (please see the content platform section for a listing of programs offered)
 - web-based supplemental enrichment content (videos, printables, recorded lessons)
 - leveled homework packets mailed to / downloadable by parents
- Our remote model would continue the same monthly, thematic curriculum that we will use during in-person instruction.
- Weekly division schedules listing synchronous and asynchronous learning opportunities will be posted on the "Higashi at Home" webpage.
- To protect the privacy of synchronous class sessions via GoogleMeet, lesson links will be delivered exclusively to caregivers via email.
- Low-tech / alternative platform options will be available for activities upon request.

F. Out-of-School Time Plan

We continue to offer opportunities that meet the requirements for our extended day and extended year (217, 304, 365) programming. In an effort to reduce visitors on campus, some of the

weekend events that are traditionally open to the public may be offered during the same timeframe, but in a fully virtual format. Our extracurricular activities, Jazz Band and Chorus, have been postponed as public performances are not advisable and we are unable to accommodate the recommendations regarding wind instruments (which are integral to the Jazz Band) and singing (only permitted outside and with the students spaced 10 feet apart).

G. Student Supports and Professional Learning Table

Category	For Students	For Staff
Safety, Wellness, Social-Emotional Supports	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Daily attestation forms and health screenings - Social distancing practices - Increased attention to mental and physical wellness - Implementation of Zones of Regulation curriculum - Continued use of social stories to aid in processing of changes - Introduction of SEL-specific weekly lesson requirements 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Daily health screenings - Social distancing practices - Increased attention to mental and physical wellness - Professional Development Training on Zones of Regulation curriculum and implementation - Training on new SEL-specific lesson requirements
Planning and Instruction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Students will receive services in alignment with their IEP goals and objectives - Students will be offered, at a minimum, the number of hours required by DESE for their age and grade level. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The continuation of professional development opportunities pre-COVID, including weekly curriculum meetings, technology training, etc. - Additional training and planning time for SEL instruction, new remote learning platforms and tracking systems, and mandated safety protocols.
Assessment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Individualized content platforms offered based on student needs / skill level (e.g. Splash Learn, Boomcards) - Frequent parent communication to assess effectiveness of learning modalities offered - Students on campus will be assessed according to our 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Regular feedback from: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Individualized content platforms - Caregiver observation - Student observations - In-person or at-home assignments - Documentation of remote learning offerings and attendance into BHS

	typical in-person learning procedures	Remote Contact Tracker <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Continued use of daily logs to track progress toward IEP objectives for students on campus - Feedback from content platforms that track student progress
Intervention	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Increased support offered by staff, case management, and / or the IEP team after observation of reduced engagement or increased stress. - Reassessment of remote learning offerings (if applicable) based on observed student needs. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Training to identify and support increased stress or reduced engagement in students. - Reassessment of remote learning offerings and practices (if applicable) based on observed student needs.

H. Other (N/A at present)

I. Certification of Health and Safety Requirements

BHS meets the Health and Safety requirements set forth by DESE at this time. Please refer to the *Covid-19 Policies and Procedures for an In-Person Learning Model* attached to this document for more detailed information on BHS health and PPE protocols.

DESE Requirements	Boston Higashi School Protocols
(For the general ed. population) Students in grade 2 and above are required to wear a mask/face covering that covers their nose and mouth. Masks are encouraged for students in PK, K, and Grade 1.	Students are encouraged to wear masks whenever possible, as tolerated. Due to the sensory-related challenges and difficulties adapting to changes of routine associated with autism, many students struggle to wear a mask in accordance with health and safety guidelines. Practice wearing masks, as well as information about the importance of wearing masks, have been integrated into our curriculum.
Adults, including educators and staff, are required to wear masks/face coverings.	All staff are required to wear masks in all common areas and during classroom

	instruction. "Mask breaks" are allowed in accordance with the recommendations of DESE and the CDC.
Masks/face coverings are required to be worn by everyone on the bus during school bus transportation.	While many of our students struggle to tolerate a mask for the reasons stated above, Boston Higashi School staff will report any transportation staff who are not wearing a mask to the Education Office. The Education Office will follow up with the student's transportation service provider.
Districts are encouraged to aim for 6' of physical distancing when feasible, and 3' is the minimum distance allowed.	Due to our small class sizes, Boston Higashi School can maintain adequate social distance between students in the classroom. Students will have lunch, snack, and special subject classes in their homeroom classrooms. Classes are held outside when weather permits and with adequate distance between cohorts. Up to two (2) student cohorts are permitted to use the gymnasium at a time with the divider in place. Student cohorts are to maintain at least 6 feet of distance in the hallway by staggering transitions.
To the extent possible, desks should be spaced 6' apart and facing the same direction.	Due to our small class sizes, Boston Higashi School can maintain a distance of 3-6 feet between students in the classroom. All desks are facing the same direction.
Alternative spaces in schools (e.g., cafeteria, library, and auditorium) should be repurposed to increase the amount of available space.	Due to small class sizes, repurposing is not needed. Additionally, future repurposing will be avoided to the greatest extent possible as our students have difficulty generalizing the use of particular spaces (e.g. the art room, the music room, the gym, the cafeteria) to other activities (e.g. academic subjects).
Additional safety precautions are required for school nurses and/or any staff supporting students with disabilities in close proximity when distance is not possible.	As all of our students at Boston Higashi School have a diagnosis of Autism Spectrum Disorder, all staff are supplied with masks and gloves when needed. Teaching staff are advised to avoid touching students unless physical contact is necessary to support learning a skill or to keep a student safe. Nursing staff have staggered routine health room visits and supplied visual markers in the waiting area to

	support adequate social distancing.
<p>Schools should divide students into small groups that remain with each other throughout the day.</p>	<p>Students are divided into cohorts, which are small groups of students that participate in lessons, activities, and meals together. Student cohorts may differ from the student's original class assignment prior to school reopening. Cohorts are selected to minimize potential exposure between the Day and Residential Programs while retaining appropriate student groupings for learning. Teaching and support staff are assigned to particular cohorts to minimize transmission between students.</p>
<p>Families and caregivers should check for symptoms each morning before sending their children to school. A checklist of symptoms has been provided.</p>	<p>All staff, parents, students, and any individuals seeking entry into the program facilities must self-screen at home prior to coming to campus. Self-screening shall include checking for symptoms, including fever, cough, shortness of breath, gastrointestinal symptoms, new loss of taste/smell, muscle aches, or any other symptoms that feel like a cold. Parents must sign written attestations daily regarding any household contacts with COVID-19 symptoms listed above, or if they have given children medicine to lower a fever. Daily attestation forms will be filed in individual student records. Individuals who decline to complete the screening will not be permitted to enter the program facilities.</p>
<p>Students and staff are required to exercise hand hygiene upon arrival to school, before eating, before putting on and taking off masks, and before dismissal.</p>	<p>Hand sanitizer is available at student entrances, near the sign-in for students transported by caregivers, and in the receiving lobby for students transported by districts. Each classroom and bathroom is equipped with at least one sink, hand soap, disposable towels, and step-by-step visuals for the handwashing process. Students and staff are expected to wash hands or use sanitizer when a sink is unavailable, when meeting the following criteria: upon entry into and exit from program space; when coming into the program space from outside activities; before</p>

	<p>and after eating; after sneezing, coughing or nose blowing; after toileting and diapering; before handling food; after touching or cleaning surfaces that may be contaminated; after using any shared equipment like toys, computer keyboards, mouse, climbing walls; after assisting children with handwashing; before and after administration of medication; before entering vehicles used for transportation of children; after contact with facemask or cloth face covering; and before and after changing gloves.</p>
<p>Schools must ensure that they have an isolated space available for students displaying COVID-19 symptoms</p>	<p>The school has a designated isolation area, with a separate bathroom, for short-term use. Staff will be provided with appropriate PPE when assigned to the isolation room to support students. The school does not have the ability to logistically isolate, quarantine, or house a number of sick students on campus. Students and staff who present with illness will be sent home and will use a separate exit than that designated for use by everyone else.</p>
<p>Additional preventative measures, such as personal protective equipment (PPE), is required for direct service providers providing personal care to students without suspected COVID-19 but who may potentially be exposed to bodily fluids.</p>	<p>In addition to the mask requirements, enhanced PPE (e.g. disposable gloves, face shields when possible) is available to all staff while providing assistance to students with toileting.</p>