

As part of its guiding principles, the CPS Back-to-School Plan describes **student safety and well-being** as its top priority, establishes **relationships as the foundation** for all reopening efforts, and emphasizes the need to **disrupt the negative impacts of the pandemic and institutional racism** on students, families, and staff, especially those of color.

The approach to student well-being --- including social emotional, mental, & behavioral health --- builds on CPS’s existing continuum of care and differentiated student support. This plan reflects the input and perspectives of many stakeholders over a period of time. In recent years, students, families, and staff have articulated the need to focus on relationships, social emotional learning, and mental and behavioral health including through the Building Equity Bridges process, school climate surveys, student health surveys, and various public and community forums. Throughout the summer, students, families, and staff voiced their concerns and shared their ideas through working groups, collaboratives, Task Forces, surveys, School Committee meetings, and other forums.

Emerging themes from community members include:

- Positive relationships and student well-being must be the priority for the reopening of schools
- We must address the trauma experienced by all students and families, and acknowledge the disproportionate impact on black and brown students, families, and staff.
- All CPS “spaces” should be healing spaces that leverage trauma-sensitive practices.
- Families and students don’t need “fixing,” they need opportunities to define for themselves what they need and the best ways to support them.
- CPS must plan for inclusive and authentic reflection - individually and collectively - to understand and address areas of needed improvement.
- CPS must continue to build on both its internal strengths and the considerable strengths and expertise among students, families, and community partners.

This document provides a brief **overview of the key ways in which CPS is centering student wellbeing** in the Back-to-School Plan. It is a living document that must continue to evolve to reflect ongoing and emerging needs of students, caregivers, and staff. This includes responding to what educators learn from individual students and families through the beginning of the year **listening conferences and student check-in’s**.

As part of our ongoing effort to incorporate community feedback on this living plan, the CPS team welcomes your questions, feedback, and ideas through [this form](#) which will remain open, or, contact [Alice Cohen](#), Lead Teacher for SEL.

KEY COMPONENTS OF THE PLAN

Student Learning Time Designed to Build Relationships, Community, and Skills

1. Every **student schedule has dedicated time** for building connections, community, and skills. Elementary students will experience [a daily morning meeting](#). Upper school students will have a daily morning advisory session; and high school students will have both advisory sessions (new) and community meetings, which have been restructured and improved based on student, staff, and family feedback. These structures rely on intentional and skilled facilitation which are part of the [Responsive Classroom approach](#). CPS continues to offer professional development around responsive classrooms, including through CPS educators who have become Responsive Classroom trainers.
2. Schedules at all grade levels are designed to support **movement and screen breaks**, which are important to students’ overall wellbeing.
3. Schedules at all grade levels include **small group opportunities** to build relationships and provide more personalized instructional support that will better serve students’ academic, social emotional, and mental health needs.

4. CPS has adopted the five [SEL competencies](#) developed by the national Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL): *self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision making*. As part of the JK-5 Educator Collaboratives, teams of educators worked through the summer to develop **shared instructional materials for the first weeks of schools**. Their toolkits, and the activities planned for students, are grounded in these five social emotional learning standards. We also have these competencies in a grade band framework.
5. **Health educators** will be providing regular direct instruction in elementary, middle, and high school, with a focus on key health topics such as **decision making, communication and advocacy**. CRLS has adjusted their instructional approach to deliver wellness learning modules intended to provide a more holistic experience, including a Boston University develop module, *COVID-19 and Stress*. Direct instruction and opportunity for skill building practice in health, physical education and wellness classes provides students the opportunity to further develop the following [skills](#): content acquisition, analyzing influences, accessing valid and reliable information, interpersonal communication, decision making, goal setting and advocacy skills.
6. Both **visual and performing arts and athletics** play significant roles in supporting social emotional development. The CPS athletics and arts departments have developed robust plans to ensure students can access the important social-emotional, mental, behavioral, and physical health benefits that come from participation in sports and the arts.

Building Staff Capacity to Use Trauma-Informed and Restorative Practices

7. Multiple CPS departments are **providing professional development to build staff capacity** to support students' social emotional, mental, and behavioral health needs. Professional development will be delivered in a variety of ways, including through department trainings, school-based sessions, educator meet-ups for peer learning, coaching, and required and optional online training. A sample of topics include: Managing Group Dynamics, Navigating the Middle Years (grade 3 - 7), Managing Student Anxiety, Educators' Lessons Learned from Implementing Restorative Circles, Digital Pedagogy that Builds Peer Relationships, and Utilizing Mediation and Restorative Approaches.
8. Staff schedules will include dedicated time each week for **student and family connections as well as planning, collaboration, and training**.
9. CPS has expanded its team of **school-based social workers**, who provide dedicated expert support to address students' individual needs AND identify patterns of need for districtwide response. For example, in Spring 2020, school-based social workers observed an increase in anxiety-based issues and implemented a districtwide intervention by "pushing in" to all grade 2 and 3 classrooms to provide direct instruction on managing anxiety.
10. CPS continues to build the cohort of CPS educators trained in **restorative practices**, including ongoing training and support of student mediators.

Structures to Identify and Provide Differentiated Support to Students and Families

11. Approximately 6 weeks into the school year, CPS will administer a **social emotional learning survey** with students in grades 3 - 12 as part of the first in a series of district wide student check-in's. This information will be used to inform individual, school and district wide efforts to support student needs.
12. Every CPS student will be **matched with a designated staff member** who will conduct **weekly one-on-one check-in's** to build relationships and support student well-being. See attachment for more details.

13. CPS will start the school year with **listening conferences with every family** to build relationships with families and identify goals and needs. Additional family conferences will take place throughout the year.
14. Every school will operate its **Student Support Team**, which meets weekly to review data, discuss the needs of students that have been referred by teachers, and plan for differentiated academic, social emotional, mental and behavioral needs, including referring students and families for external services.
15. Launched in Spring 2020, the SEL's **District Rapid Response Team** will provide more intensive support for educators that need additional specialized support to address student needs in a timely way.
16. **Partnership with Riverside Community Care:** CPS contracts with Riverside, a community-based non-profit organization, to provide therapeutic services to students in school, provide crisis intervention services for educators, and oversee CPS's FEMA grant which provides access to free and confidential mental health services. Riverside is also developing a training for CPS educators on how to observe neglect and abuse in virtual settings. CRLS hosts additional partnerships to provide expert support for students, including the **Cambridge Teen Health Center, the Becoming a Man (BAM) program, and BRYT: Bridge for Resilient Youth in Transition program.**
17. The newly expanded Family Engagement Team and SEL team are partnering to **Support Family and Caregivers to Support Student Needs.** For example, planning is underway to host a variety of parent forums to support social-emotional learning at home and provide resources (in multiple languages). Virtual gatherings are being planned to continually address parent/caregiver needs.
18. **Launch of CPS Community Support Center:** Later this month, CPS will launch the new CPS Community Support Center, a one-stop phone, email, and text helpline for families to be connected to resources and assistance.

LONG-TERM PLANNING

Several efforts are underway to continue to strengthen CPS's social emotional, mental, and behavioral support strategy.

19. CPS is in the process of establishing its new Office of Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging, which will provide enhanced collaboration, coordination, impact, and equity lens for this work, alongside district efforts to improve family engagement and advance racial equity and anti-racism.
20. CPS was accepted into the state's SEL & Mental Health Academy, which will support a district-wide team/taskforce of multiple stakeholders over the course of three years to develop a comprehensive structure, professional development plan, and evaluation strategy for addressing student social emotional, mental, and behavioral health.

ATTACHED: Overview of Weekly Student Check-In's

Given the School Climate subcommittee's detailed discussions about weekly check-in's, we have also attached additional details about this component of the plan.

ATTACHMENT 1 - Overview: Weekly Student Check-In's

This year, every student will be matched with a designated school staff member for a live one-on-one check-in each week to build meaningful relationships between students and staff, beginning the week of September 21.

The plan for implementing these check-in's was developed with input from the students, families, and staff on the Student Well-Being working group, the Student Taskforce, and multiple conversations at the School Climate subcommittee. It also draws on the lessons learned from efforts in Spring 2020 to connect with students and track outreach.

Information Shared/Gathered During Family Conferences

During the family conferences that will start the year, educators will share information about the weekly outreach plan, identify family/student's preferred communication mode, and allow families to opt-out of the weekly check-in.

Matching Students and Staff

Each school will assign every student to an adult, based on previous relationships and what is known about students.

- Elementary schools will consider **not** matching any student with their **current** classroom teacher to avoid inequities, and will coordinate matches for households with multiple siblings in school.
- Upper schools will match students based on advisory structures and CRLS will utilize existing Community Meeting structures to match students and staff.
- To ensure outreach is consistent and successful, schools will establish a team or a backup so that students will be contacted even if their matched educator is out.
- Schools are encouraged to adjust matches as needed for relationship success, including considering a reflection point where all students are able to reflect and provide feedback on the check-in's. Students have emphasized the need for student voice in this process.
- Schools will check-in with families that opted out of this check-in in November to make sure they still want to opt-out.

Outreach expectations

Each week, staff will have dedicated time in their schedules to conduct one-on-one student outreach. The conversations will be asset-based, driven by students, and focused on building relationships.

- Staff will be provided training on how to use the Language Line (live translation services) to connect with families whose preferred communication language is not English.
- Staff are encouraged to share a personal video or other introduction to the student and family.
- Staff may make arrangements to conduct in-person check-in's, outside in public places using social distancing protocols.
- For younger students, staff will work with families to identify optimal check-in times. For older students, staff should consider using the Google Classroom Calendar appointment slots feature to make scheduling easier for students.
- The overall purpose of these conversations is an informal check-in to ask, "How are you?," "What do you need?," and "How can [our school] better support you?" Schools may develop more detailed protocols for these conversations.

Follow-up

- By Friday at 5pm each week, document students "not reached" in Aspen Journal, which will allow staff to identify whether or not a student should receive follow-up by the Student Support Team because they were not reached, they are otherwise not engaged, or need additional support.
- Each school will clarify additional school-wide protocols for referral, Student Support Team operations, and follow-up.
- Data will be reported to the School Committee on a biweekly basis.