



APEA - STATEMENT FOR RELEASE

The APEA is continuing to work for our students, our families, our staff, and our community. We represent paraprofessionals, clerical workers, EL and SE specialists, guidance counselors, classroom teachers, and many other educational professionals in negotiation sessions with the ARPS School Committees. We have reached several points of agreement with the district regarding public health and safety for our students and staff, including a commitment to tie building reopening to demonstrated ability to meet [ASHRAE standards](#). We can be assured that once buildings demonstrate they are meeting these standards, our indoor facilities will be as safe as possible to reopen.

In our sessions with the ARPS School Committees, we continue to stay focused on negotiating health and safety protections for our community. We are striving for a collaborative solution that draws on the many resources of our district, and we are grateful for the work of each and every person who is fighting for a safe and equitable return to learning. We have been transparent throughout the process with our membership, but have put little into the wider public out of respect toward the School Committee's repeated requests not to bargain openly. In the interest of correcting two key pieces of misinformation, we would like to share some information with the wider community:

1. **The APEA does NOT want remote learning to be like it was last spring.** Our educators faced constant changing directives from DESE, inconsistent messages from our government, and evolving expectations all throughout the spring. We know this led to confusion, disconnection, and an acute sense of loss for ourselves and our students. Remote learning this year WILL be different. Educators spent countless unpaid hours over the summer developing ways to refine and improve remote learning. On August 15th, we submitted multiple "distance learning improvement" plans to the School Committee. These were draft plans created and collaborated on by our educators, considering feedback from over 100 different teachers across the district. These plans were focused on explaining our pedagogical improvements, collaboration opportunities, and ways to better connect with students for whom remote learning was unsuccessful. We did not specify the number of hours of "synchronous time" per student *not* because we didn't want it, but because we were communicating a need to consider, in collaboration with our administrators and instructional teams, what is developmentally appropriate for our students across a wide age-range (ages 3-22) and sustainable for educators. We agreed to minimum requirements for synchronous learning back in August and have shared this with our membership.
2. **The APEA tentatively accepted the district's proposed "phase" model back in August.** We still stand by our proposed "fully inclusive" phased model, as we hoped to open up in-person spots to students and families in need. However, in the interest of progressive bargaining, we accepted, early on, the district's proposal and have asked that reopening and moving into phases be tied to multiple public health metrics, availability of PPE, rapid testing, and proven building safety. Our focus is and always has been sending our children and staff into the safest buildings possible.