



Bonny Eagle School District

MSAD 6 / RSU 6

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To: MSAD 6 School Community
From: Paul A. Penna, Superintendent of Schools
Date: August 24, 2021
Subject: Return to School Plan for 2021-2022

In May 2021, Ms. Napolitano and I partnered with building administrators and scheduled community forums to discuss the safe return plans for all students to in-person instruction in September. Our plans were based on key recommendations from the Maine Department of Education and the CDC during the 2020-2021 school year. Although distancing requirements from last year are current recommendations, it seemed logical to follow classroom spacing requirements to safely return all students to in-person instruction. Ironically, our planning was forward thinking based on the latest CDC recommendations and quarantining requirements.

The Plan Design

- Return all students safely to in-person instruction 5 days a week;
- Students and staff will be required to be masked on District transportation;
- Establish a safe teaching and learning environment for staff and students;
- Maintain 3 foot classroom spacing to the extent possible;
 - Hire 13 teachers: 10 elementary school and 3 middle school
 - Hire 11 support staff: specifically and hopefully Ed Tech IIIs (7 for elementary and 4 for the high school)
- Establish universal masking for all MSAD 6 facilities and indoor teaching and learning settings;
- Limit community access to MSAD 6 facilities as determined by administrators and managers;
- Maintain 4 to 6 foot spacing for breakfast, snack, and lunch;
- Utilize outdoor spaces as much as possible and when feasible for teaching and learning, allowing students to have a mask breaks;
- School leaders will continue to promote the importance of distancing while using indoor common spaces;
- Expand and improve K-12 social/emotional services and transition planning for students;
- Return to late bus transportation; and
- Offer pool testing to all co-curricular activities for early detection of symptomatic individuals and minimize quarantining impacts to others.

CDC Recommendations

The Medical Team along with District administrators are recommending that MSAD 6 continue to follow the CDC recommendations as we have done throughout the pandemic as their recommendations have promoted health and safety for all students and staff, provided strategies for mitigation, and encouraged schools to promote in-school learning for all students.

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/schools-childcare/k-12-guidance.html>

Social Distancing

As previously stated, with the support of additional Cares Act funds, we hired additional staff to allow for 3 foot distancing in classrooms and 4 to 6 foot distancing in eating spaces with all students facing in one direction. Each building administrator will ensure that spacing expectations are posted throughout the building and that all common spaces are marked appropriately. However, the Department of Education is clear that those recommendations cannot be used to limit teaching and learning opportunities for students. It's important to note that universally masking and 3 foot distance will limit quarantine requirements to positive test/symptomatic students.

Playgrounds/Recess/Co-Curricular Activities

Although we know that during the past year outdoor play is extremely safe and that the risk of transmission is extremely low, it is important to remind students about the importance of distancing practices. MSAD 6 has started the fall co-curricular season, and we will continue to remind all participants about virus mitigating strategies. The high school co-curricular director is currently working with each group to determine the interest in weekly pool testing to mitigate the threat of viral spread. Once middle school programs begin, they will be offered the same option. This practice will help avoid group quarantining and allow for participants to experience a full season of competition.

Transportation

State guidance required the masking of students while on school transportation on July 15th. MSAD 6 has enforced masking while using District transportation since July 16th. Our buses will run at full capacity to ensure that students get to and from school at their assigned times. Because administrators need to plan for drop-off and pick-up locations, we are asking parents/families to communicate with building principals if they plan to transport their children.

Lunch and Food Service

I am requiring principals to create eating spaces with 4 to 6 foot spacing to be consistent with spacing and supervision limitations. The CDC requires that when students are unmasked that quarantining is required for students within 6 feet, in all directions. We understand the risk associated with unmasked students and will utilize outdoor space as much as possible. It's important that we encourage students to take advantage of the State of Maine and USDA changes in program eligibility to cover school breakfast and lunch for all children.

It remains critical for parents to complete the Meal Benefit Application by October 1, 2021, whether they believe their child would be eligible in a pre- or post-pandemic economy. These forms can be completed online, during registration, or on paper and submitted to schools. In addition, our Dean of Students professionals will be using the Community Service Program van to go into the school

community to help families to complete the application as well as supporting them with educational resources. In the last nine years, MSAD 6 has experienced a \$147,000 reduction in Title I funding as a direct result of families not completing the free and reduced meals application. The information collected is confidential and only reviewed by the manager of the School Nutrition Department, Mrs. Dorothy Janotta. Please help us to support all students by completing this simple application.

Athletics and Extra- and Co-Curricular Activities

MSAD 6 has resumed all extra- and co-curricular sports and activities and after-school transportation. Athletes (outside of locker room meetings/team meetings) are not required to mask. The athletic/activities directors are communicating with coaches, athletes, and parents about the voluntary pool testing program. It's with their support that we will provide this resource as an opportunity to have access to advanced information about symptomatic or asymptomatic participants before other members of the activity are impacted.

Remote Instruction

Based on survey results last spring, the study team that I assembled determined that 145 of the 205 respondents were willing to commit to a remote pathway. After releasing the return-to-school plan in the spring, the interest dropped to approximately 15 families K-12. Therefore, District hiring focused on returning all students to in-person instruction, and we currently do not have the staff capacity to provide a remote option for students. I will continue to explore ways that this could become a viable learning pathway for students in MSAD 6. I encourage families who have documented medical conditions to share the information with the school nurse and/or building principal to discuss next steps.

The MSAD 6 Plan Moving Forward

Consistent with last year, I will report information about next steps to the School Board during their second meeting of the month. Currently, there is no CDC plan about what metrics will be used to change safety recommendations, but it's been suggested that districts work with county emergency management agencies to develop a plan. I will work with both York and Cumberland County Agencies as well as DOE, CDC, MSAD 6 Medical Team, and regional RNs in order to develop a plan that is aligned with viral spread changes.

PAP:hms