

RSU 26 Fall 2021 Reopening Guidelines - (adopted 8/18/21, rev. 2/15/22)

“Schools are an important part of the infrastructure of communities. They provide safe and supportive learning environments for students that support social and emotional development, provide access to critical services, and improve life outcomes. They also employ people, and enable parents, guardians, and caregivers to work. Though COVID-19 outbreaks have occurred in school settings, multiple studies have shown that transmission rates within school settings, when multiple prevention strategies are in place, are typically lower than – or similar to – community transmission levels.” (CDC School Guidelines).

In accordance with US CDC guidelines for schools, RSU 26 will return to school five days a week with all students and staff in-person for the 2021-22 school year.

Social & Academic Supports

Social & Emotional Support - Social and emotional development will be addressed through small teacher- student ratios, advisory programs, as well as through additional social work services in the district. We will focus on transitions back to school by continuing the practice of staggering the opening days for students transitioning into new school buildings and fostering reengagement in the first weeks of school.

Student achievement will be assessed and monitored throughout the school year to identify and address any gaps in learning that may have been created. Intervention will be provided in classrooms and through targeted plans and programs in order to support students.

Technology readiness - we will continue to incorporate technology in our teaching and learning in order to maintain successful platforms that were developed this past year and be ready to support distance learning if it becomes necessary. All courses or grade levels will have a digital classroom presence (Google Classroom or Seesaw) that is updated at least weekly (K-5) or every other day (6-12) and teachers and students are prepared to use it in the case that remote learning needs to go into effect.

Hybrid/Remote Learning - we are not planning to offer hybrid or remote options for all students. We will only provide limited, interim remote learning primarily through asynchronous learning. To be considered for this limited remote learning, families would need to provide the school with documentation of medical necessity or family displacement. If families would like more information about documentation needed they should contact their child’s school principal. Families who are looking for a long-term, full remote program should explore external options like Maine’s virtual charter schools, national virtual learning companies or homeschool (for more information on these options, contact our curriculum coordinator at mdiamond@rsu26.org)

Health & Safety Guidance

1) Encouraging vaccination - The district strongly encourages all students and staff to obtain a complete COVID 19 vaccination when eligible. Towards this end the district will conduct vaccination clinics at appropriate times. The district will also continue to record vaccination status privately (for

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contact tracing) and report aggregate numbers publicly as volunteered by students and as required by DHHS to be submitted to the district for all employees. All employees (including extracurricular) must either provide proof of vaccination to the district or participate in pooled testing weekly. Vaccinated individuals will not be required to quarantine after a close contact (unless symptomatic).

2) Masks - In alignment with CDC guidance, masks are required indoors for all students, employees and visitors. Masks are required on buses (see Transportation below). Masks are not required outdoors. Administration will develop mask break expectations & guidelines and monitor implementation.

3) Distancing - Social distancing of 3' will be maintained whenever compatible with full in person return per CDC guidelines, including almost all sedentary classroom situations. Distancing will not be enforced during brief (<5 minute) transition periods in hallways nor during specific active/cooperative learning activities in class. Distancing is not required outdoors. Unvaccinated staff should maintain 6' foot distancing from students when compatible with educational needs. Social distancing will be maximized in cafeterias as compatible with full return to schools but will not be required. Alternative lunch space providing 6 ft. spacing for lunch will be available upon request to the building administrator at any time.

4) Pooled testing - Opt-in pooled testing will be offered to all staff and students on a weekly basis in accordance with the ME DoE guidelines and testing program to provide for early detection. Participants in pooled testing will not be required to quarantine after a close contact (unless symptomatic).

5) Ventilation - Schools will continue to be operated to ensure high rates of air change through HVAC equipment, maximizing outdoor air to the extent possible and using MERV 13 filtering for all recycled air such as may be required by colder temperatures. Teachers continue to be encouraged to keep windows open when temperatures allow. HEPA air filters will remain in each classroom.

6) Handwashing - All students and staff continue to be encouraged to engage in frequent handwashing for 20 seconds; hand sanitizer will remain available in all spaces.

7) Symptom check protocol - Administration will modify COVID-19 symptom lists as guidance is updated, and will communicate guidance and requirements regularly to stakeholders. Symptom checks must be conducted daily before school for all students and staff. Students and staff showing symptoms are required to stay home.

8) COVID response protocols for positive cases - The district will follow current state guidelines for handling the occurrence of a COVID+ case in the schools (SOP document).

9) Cleaning protocols - contracted custodial support will be continued to allow for increased overall cleaning in the building (including bathroom/classroom cleaning sign-off sheets); classroom cleaning supplies will be provided in all classrooms and staff is encouraged to clean surfaces as practical. CDC guidelines state that "cleaning once a day is usually enough to sufficiently remove potential virus that may be on surfaces"

Additional Considerations

Transportation - Return to pre-COVID capacity. Masks required on buses per CDC guidelines. When weather permits, windows should be opened in front and rear of the bus for increased ventilation.

Performing Arts/Music - Following CDC guidance, masking and bell covers on musical instruments will be required for all indoor activities including musicals, band, and choir. May use shared equipment, but should clean in between uses.

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Parent volunteers/visitors (school day) - resume volunteer program, following established protocols (including sign-in form/sheet that includes an acknowledgement form outlining safety protocols).

Meetings (in-person vs. virtual) - continue to utilize virtual meetings on a case-by-case basis depending on meeting participants and agenda.

Extracurricular Activities (Guidelines, Planning, etc) - follow general guidelines outlined above (i.e. same as school day); groups may wish to continue virtual meetings/events as desired or able; keep attendance records for in person meetings/practices/events.

Parent Conferences - continue virtual conferences, with option for parents to request in person conference if desired. (Kristin & Richard will talk with staff about this to bring more feedback).

Special Events (Open House, Parent athletic meetings, Literacy nights, School-wide gatherings, etc) -

- Parent athletic meetings - worked well virtually - would like to continue
- Open House - to be held in person w/ consideration of staggering grade levels to limit crowding (OHS might consider a simultaneous virtual option)
- School-wide gatherings - may be held as conditions permit
- Other events - TBD on case-by-case basis as conditions permit

Outdoor Learning - Outdoor learning opportunities will be encouraged at all grade levels.

Community Transmission Ratings -

The CDC identifies four levels of community transmission and provides a county-level map ([CDC scale](#)) based on weekly new infection rates. Many news sources instead report daily rates which are 1/7 of weekly rates. Percent of tests that are positive may also influence community transmission level status, although historically in Maine, with easy access to tests, new cases have been the key determiner (see previous link for full details).

Blue - Low Transmission (0-1.2 new cases/day or 0-9.9 new cases/week per 100K population)

Yellow - Moderate Transmission (1.3-7 new cases/day or 10-49.9 new cases/week per 100k population)

Orange - Substantial Transmission (7.1-14.3 new cases/day or 50-99.9 new cases/week per 100K population)

Red - High Transmission (>14.3 new cases/day or ≥100 new cases/week per 100K population)

Assemblies, gatherings and extracurricular activities may be modified based on community transmission rates. Additionally, if universal masking-in-school requirements are removed in the future the district will tie masking requirements to community transmission rates.