



School Union 69
Office of the Superintendent
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July 27, 2020

Dear School Union #69 School Communities,

In a typical year, I would be introducing myself, sharing my summer adventures and school news as a way of welcoming our students and staff back to school in the fall. This year, however, the subject on everyone's mind is whether or not we are going to reopen schools and if we do, what measures will be in place to keep students and staff safe? The state shared its latest guidance Friday afternoon, July 17th. This guidance has been extremely helpful in clarifying some of the issues we have been struggling with as we think about school reopening. In this and subsequent updates, I will provide you with some clarity about what measures will be in place in all SU #69 schools. Each school will provide a more detailed plan in a few weeks as each principal works with his/her emergency management team, teachers and families to create plans that are specific to the needs and culture of your school community. ***There is a link to a quick survey at the end of this notice, please take a moment to fill it out, this will help with the planning.*** Please keep in mind that this is a fluid situation. We are closely following the advice, recommendations and requirements of the Maine DOE and CDC and will strive to keep you updated as best we can.

Like most schools in the nation, SU #69 closed all school buildings and moved to remote operations in March of 2020. As the COVID 19 epidemic spread, schools remained closed. Teachers and administrators worked with families to keep students engaged while they were safe at home. Together, school staff and families faced the challenges brought on by this pandemic and that is how we must continue, we will need to work together. ***What comes next for the students of SU #69 depends on our mutual cooperation, compassion and willingness to keep in mind that if and when schools reopen, it will be up to all of us to keep each other safe.***

The DOE and CDC will be using a tiered system for returning to school. While these scenarios are advisory in nature, they will include metrics around community spread, active cases and other health and safety concerns specific to our area. These tiers will break out into three possible categories, and designations will be made by county. The designations are as follows:

Green: The county has a relatively low risk of COVID 19 spread and in-person instruction can be implemented.

Yellow: The county has an elevated risk of COVID 19 spread and hybrid instruction models should be implemented.

Red: The county has a high risk of COVID 19 spread and in-person instruction is not recommended.

This advisory system will be posted by the DOE starting on July 31st and updated on a biweekly basis.

Currently, your principal has been consulting with experts in facilities management, health, law, and education in order to grasp the complex tasks involved in safely reopening schools. They will continue to work with emergency management teams, teachers, school committee members, as well as other administrators and stakeholders to provide your community with plans for the three different scenarios.

However, across our district there are some commonalities, specific advice from the DOE and the Maine CDC that SU #69 will incorporate into all back-to-school plans.

Scenario 1: (Green) In this scenario, as many students and staff as possible will return, in person, to the school buildings. The school settings will necessarily be modified for health and safety, specific to the challenges of the Coronavirus epidemic. These modifications could include, but are not limited to: modified or different learning spaces, schedule changes, increased or different use of technology, health and safety protocols and limited mobility within the school building. Each school will provide a more detailed plan that will incorporate feedback from staff, families and the school committee. Final plans will be released in mid-August.

Any scenario where we will be meeting in person will include the following **mandatory** requirements:

- Every day, all students, under the supervision of a parent or guardian, and staff must perform a self-check for symptoms (a checklist will be provided) before entering a school building or boarding a bus.
- Anyone experiencing COVID 19 symptoms should stay home.
- Masks must be worn on school buses at all times by every person on the bus. Further restrictions will be forthcoming.
- Masks are required for all persons above two years of age, and must be worn all day except when eating (during a scheduled snack or lunch break), or when taking a scheduled mask break.
- All students will stay at least three feet apart from one another, 6 feet away if eating or taking a scheduled mask break.
- Adults will need to remain 6 feet away from each other and from students. Special circumstances where students and staff must be closer than 6 feet will necessitate the use of PPE.
- In individual situations, face shields may be used, but this must be done in consultation with the school nurse and principal.
- Exceptions to the mask rule may be made for those for whom wearing a mask poses a bona fide health and safety risk; these exceptions can only be implemented in consultation with the school nurse and principal.
- Masks must be supplied by families and cloth masks must be washed daily. Extra masks will be on hand at the school for students that need them.
- At this time, not wearing a mask poses a risk to the health and safety of all others in the school. Staff and students unwilling to wear masks safely could be removed from the school and/or face disciplinary action.
- Sharing materials will be discouraged whenever possible, students are encouraged to bring necessary items (water bottles, notebooks, pens, etc.) for their individual use only.
- Shared spaces, such as bathrooms and common areas, will have limited occupancy and other restrictions imposed so as to meet social distancing requirements.
- Extra hand washing/sanitizing stations will be available throughout the schools. Students and staff must wash/sanitize hands before getting on a bus, before entering a school building, before and after eating and after using the restroom. Training will be provided for students and staff and further instructions will be given at each school.
- We will utilize outside spaces as much as possible, families must send students to school with weather-appropriate clothing.
- Non-essential visitors will be restricted, each school will provide specific instructions regarding visiting the school.
- Groups in any one area, room or classroom will not exceed the Governor's gathering size limits.

Scenario 2: (Yellow) In this scenario, students will rotate through a schedule where a portion of the students will be in person while other students will be taught remotely. All of the above in-person requirements will be in force, and high-needs students will be prioritized for in-person learning. Further details for each school will be outlined in the school-specific plans.

Scenario 3: (Red) In this scenario, schools will move to remote learning entirely. Again, each school is developing specific plans that will outline how students will participate in classes and exchange information with teachers.

Timeline:

July 27 - August 17:

- Periodic updates from the Superintendent's office will keep families and staff informed of the "big picture".
- Emergency Management Teams will meet to develop school-specific plans for each scenario listed above.
- School Committees will review draft plans and provide feedback.
- Plans will be continuously updated and revised, given feedback from families, staff and community members.

August 18-

- School-specific plans will be released.
- Plans will be updated as dictated by changes in local instances of COVID 19 and advice from Maine DOE and CDC.

Week of August 24:

- Teachers and school staff return and prepare for the opening of school.

The Central Office is open from 8 am to 4 pm on most days should you have any questions or concerns. We are practicing safety measures, so please plan on making an appointment, wearing a mask and keeping a safe distance if you want to come visit in person. It is clear to me that our communities have had low incidences of COVID 19 because of the diligence and caring of every one of you. We miss your students and are anxious to get to a place where we can have school in person as safely as possible. Each of us is truly interconnected and never before has it been so crucial that we work together to keep each other safe.

Here is the link to a very brief survey that will help us with our planning process. Please take a moment to fill out this survey, Thank you!

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/3Z7LB3J>

Wishing you well,

Kate

Kate Clark

Superintendent of Schools, SU #69

Keep an eye out for further updates from the superintendent at:

https://union.fivetowns.net/for_parents/tips