

Maine School Administrative District No. 59

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Dear MSAD 59 Parents, Guardians, Students, and Community,

I hope that you have had the opportunity to enjoy time with family and friends. Here at school we've been hard at work preparing for the upcoming school year. Our goal will be a return to school that looks far more like it did in the past. This letter is to provide you with a brief update of where things stand nationally, and with our state, and how MSAD 59 is going to approach returning to school on September 1st.

Things that we know have changed:

- • Maine has lifted the State of Emergency, and indicated that all guidance from schools will come from Federal CDC (See DOE memo dated July 16th: <https://bit.ly/3ilbs7o>)
- • The Federal CDC guidance for schools, which was posted on July 9th, can be found here: <https://cdc.gov/coronavirus>
- • The New guidance does not include 6 feet distancing, which will allow us to have all students back for daily in-person learning in ALL grades.
- • With a return to full in-person learning, MSAD 59 will no longer have a remote- learning option for any students outside of very rare/unique situations. All students will be in school.
- • We have expanded opportunities for student learning, including school-day, after- school and expanded summer learning opportunities, some of which will continue into the school year.
- • MSAD 59 will return to a traditional calendar for the year: With a start date of September 1st for K-9, and September 2 for K-12.

Things that will remain the same:

- • MSAD 59 will provide a high quality education for our students.
- • All students and staff coming to school will need to continue to follow screening protocols for COVID-19 and remain home if sick.
- • Federal and State Quarantining/contact-tracing protocols will remain in place.
- • Non-essential visitors will be limited with the same protocol as last year.

Things that are still changing:

- • In July the State of Maine announced it would be following all Federal CDC guidance.
- • Federal CDC Guidance, which until the last week in July, would have all unvaccinated individuals in schools (staff, students, volunteers) wear masks indoors, recently changed. As of an update in early August, Federal CDC guidance now recommends to have everyone in

school mask when indoors, regardless of their vaccination status. area. MSAD59, also, strongly recommends masking indoors, but feel this should be parent choice. However, CDC guidance does make masking **mandatory** on buses and vans, and this will be enforced.

- In addition to these pieces, all school districts will now be asked to collect staff vaccination information and report it to DHHS.

Recently, Dr. Shah met with school officials from around the state to explain why the new Delta Variant poses such a significant risk. He verified the importance of following the Federal CDC guidance, including masking indoors, and indicated that the need to mask is based on the new variant and is subject to change as things improve.

Below are common questions that I will address with the most current information that we have received.

When will things be clear about what the year will look like?

We don't expect to have complete details on what the opening of school will look like until late August. Over the next few weeks we will be learning more about state and federal CDC guidance and will be meeting with and discussing the start of school with other district leaders from around the state.

What will school look like?

We do believe school will look much like it has in the past, with pick-up and drop off times, lunch schedules, and student movement mostly looking like it did before COVID-19. There will be some adjustments to limit exposure in the event of a case, and distancing when possible, but a key priority of the new guidance is the social well-being of students and the need to have kids in school.

What practices will be used to protect students and staff?

We know that hygiene, hand washing, ventilation, staying home when sick and getting tested, and cleaning and disinfection are important layers of prevention to keep school safe. We will continue these practices from last year including emphasizing personal hygiene with students.

Will COVID-19 vaccinations be required to attend school?

COVID-19 vaccinations continue to be the single most important recommendation by the federal CDC and all major medical groups for a safe return to school, but they are not required to attend school. At this time only those age 12 and above are eligible for vaccinations. MSAD 59 will continue to partner with area health agencies to provide the COVID-19 vaccination to any students, staff, parents and community members who would like to get it.

I realize there are still many unanswered questions, but please trust that MSAD59 administration and staff will be doing whatever it takes to have our students back in school in person and safe.

Please enjoy the next couple of weeks, and thank you once again for your patience and understanding as we navigate these trying times.

Bonnie C. Levesque

Superintendent of Schools MSAD59