



# ATHOL-ROYALSTON REGIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICT

1062 Pleasant Street • P.O. Box 968  
Athol, MA 01331  
Tel: 978-249-2400 • Fax: 978-249-2402  
Website: [www.arrsd.org](http://www.arrsd.org)

*The Athol-Royalston Regional School District is committed to providing challenging educational experiences that inspire students to acquire the knowledge and skills to become responsible citizens in the global community.*

February 26, 2021

**Darcy Fernandes**  
Superintendent of Schools

Dear ARRSD Parents/Guardians:

**Jody Leazott**  
Administrative Assistant

On February 11, 2021, the Massachusetts Department of Secondary and Elementary Education (DESE) issued new school transportation guidance. Revisions to this guidance are based on scientific data. The data demonstrates significant air exchange happens on moving school buses with open windows (21-43 air exchanges per hour), and the continued masking of students is effective in mitigating COVID.

**John Salovardos**  
Director of Pupil Services

**David King**  
Principal  
Athol-Royalston  
High School

Below is the transportation guidance MA DESE issued on February 11, 2021.

**Molly Superchi**  
Pre-K -8 Curriculum  
Director

- **Elementary Schools:** Capacity limitations and physical distancing requirements for students on buses are lifted.
- **Middle and High Schools:** Capacity limitations and physical distancing requirements for students on buses are lifted, except for middle and high schools in districts with high community prevalence. For middle and high schools in districts with high community prevalence, capacity limitations and physical distancing requirements on buses are amended to allow two students per bus bench.
- **Masks:** All staff and students on the bus, regardless of age, must wear masks at all times. Exemptions for students due to medical and/or behavioral reasons.
- **Ventilation:** Keep windows open at all times during operation at least two inches. In adverse weather conditions, every other window can be opened.
- **Seat assignments:** Students should be assigned to a single bus and a particular seat, and siblings/same household members will sit together.

**Thomas Telicki**  
Principal  
Athol-Royalston  
Middle School

**Shannon Cleveland**  
Principal  
Athol Community  
Elementary School

With this new guidance, The district has decided to change the bus structures to the following:

**Cynthia Kennedy**  
Principal  
Royalston Community School

**Stephen Femino**  
Facilities and Transportation

- Maximum students per bus bench will be two regardless of grade level
- All students will be assigned seats
- No bus will exceed 45 students
- All second runs in the district will be eliminated

**Lynn Bassett**  
Business Manager

**Edward Skutnik**  
Director of Technology

To accommodate this new bus structure, the school district will be adjusting the bus routes starting March 8, 2021. The new bus routes will be posted on the district's webpage on Tuesday, March 2, 2021. Please be aware that this change will allow all district students to arrive and leave at the same time. Royalston Community School bus routes and times will not change. The busing changes will result in the regular school day returning to normal hours: AHS 7:40-2:05 PM, ARMS 7:30-1:55 PM, ACES/RCS 8:30 AM-3:05PM.

**Carolyn Brown**  
Food Services Director

**Gladys Torres**  
District Translator

Thank you for your patience with these changing processes. COVID has made this year difficult for all of us. We are doing our best as a district to get back to a sense of normalcy for everyone.

Sincerely,  
Darcy Fernandes