

Fall Reopening Plan Update

The Fourth of July is behind us. I hope many of had the opportunity to relax and enjoy time with your family and friends using appropriate COVID-19 distancing and protocols. As the Superintendent of Schools, I understand everyone is anxious and concerned about the opening of school in the fall. I have a thirteen-year-old daughter, and I certainly wonder about her being safe as she enters.

The District is working hard to try to relieve some of this anxiety and stress by communicating frequently and often, and seeking advice from all stakeholders. The advice given will be used to revise the reopening plan when appropriate. After receiving the Commissioner's reopening guidelines, a PowerPoint went out to the public explaining our thinking about reopening. Today's update adds to our initial thoughts expressed in last week's PowerPoint. Any feedback on these latest thoughts would be appreciated. By the end of the week, a survey form will go out, asking for your input.

Fall Reopening:

- The District is preparing for a full return to school using state guidelines.
- The District recognizes some families, teachers, and students may not be able to return to school due to medical issues. A process is in place to deal with individual cases. The process includes individuals self-identifying their particular issues, and the District responding with a plan to serve their needs. A survey has gone out to teachers and staff already via the Athol Teachers Association (ATA) to collect the information, and another survey will go out to students and families by the end of next week.
- **New:** The District will put together a contingency plan for opening if the state changes its guidelines. The contingency plan will include a plan for a hybrid model of both in-school and remote learning and a plan for remote learning only. A draft Remote Learning plan is in the works. The link to the remote learning plan draft is below:
<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1QyCo-P1HZsWTV8KEdl8w2OuyxiLwaqjV/view>

Facilities Update:

- The District will use a fogging system to disinfect classrooms.
- The guidelines given by the state require students to be at least three to six feet apart in classes.
- **New:** Custodial staff, along with building administrators, are working on ensuring these guidelines are met by going through each room, measuring spaces and setting up desks using guidelines.
- **New:** The District has requested advice from the fogging machine company and Special Education Parent Advisory Council (SEPAC) on the fogging system to see if it can be used during the school day or only at night. The District hopes to have answers by the end of next week.

- **New:** With additional funds from the state; the hope is to hire additional workers at each school to do extra cleaning of bathrooms and high-touch areas throughout the school day.
- **New:** Two additional teachers are being requested at the middle school to meet state distancing guidelines.
- It has been determined that all schools have enough room to meet the distance guidelines set by the state.

Feeding Students:

- **New:** Because of the special distancing requirements from the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education it will be difficult to continue breakfast in the classroom, the District is evaluating the idea of breakfast being sent home with students every afternoon so that students can eat breakfast before coming to school in the morning.
- **New:** The District is assessing how many large spaces are available to accommodate students for lunch. The state guidelines require students to be at least six feet apart when not wearing a mask.
- **New:** Because masks for grades Pre-K through one are not required, these children will be able to eat lunch in classrooms.

Technology:

- **New:** It is the District's goal to assign every student in the District a Chromebook. If the school committee approves Chromebooks for everyone, each student will have a yearly non-reimbursable fee of \$25.00 for the repair of the Chromebook if it is damaged. Families who qualify as low income would not have to pay the damage fee.
- **New:** The District is looking into a low-cost Internet fee for families. Some companies offer this reduced fee if there is a school-age child in the home. The District is also looking into public access sites for families who do not have the Internet at home. These access sites would allow a family to go to the site and use the Internet.

Social-Emotional Support:

- **New:** The District will be working with the Employee Assistance Program to find a way to have access for teachers and staff during the day to get support if needed.
- **New:** Additional guidance counselors will be added at ACES and ARMS.

Special Education:

- **New:** If Care Act funds are approved, additional staff will be hired to give support to students when teachers are pulled for anticipated additional IEP meetings. Also, extra special education hours will be in place to help students who are demonstrating gaps in learning.

Professional Development for Teachers and Staff:

- **New:** Superintendents across the State have requested that the Commissioner allow for three fewer days of teaching in the fall to ensure all teachers can be trained in new processes and procedures before school starts.
- **New:** The District will be holding training for parents to understand how Google Meets and Google Classroom work before starting school. These systems will be used if the students have to go to remote learning at anytime next year.

Health and Safety Protocols:

- Masks/face covering required to be worn by everyone except for Pre-K to Grade 1 students and those who have a documented medical condition.
- **New:** As many of us know, children in younger grades and some students with disabilities tend to want to touch things in their environment often. Teachers with these “high-touch” students will be given medical gowns and gloves as extra protection.
- The District will train all teachers, staff, and students in the frequency of washing hands, not touching, proper face mask/face covering use, and signs of identifying COVID-19. Training will be done in age-appropriate ways.

I hope this information is helpful to everyone. Please remember everyone's voice is valued. The District wants to get your feedback, so please fill out the survey when you receive it. Thank you for your support of our efforts to provide the best possible education for all our children in the coming year.

If you have questions about our fall planning, please join me for a zoom meeting on July 21, 2020 at 6:30 PM. During the meeting I will give the latest update and will answer ask questions parents or guardians may have. Below are the instructions to join the meeting.

Join Zoom Meeting

Use link below

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/82291572019?pwd=dGdUV2t1YS90Wk5ma0pYRUFKcnJKUT09>
then

Enter when prompted

Meeting ID: 822 9157 2019

Password: 660830

Or call one tap mobile

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