

Dear Merrimack Families and District Staff~

I hope this finds you all well and enjoying the beautiful weather this summer has provided all of us.

As you know, the District has been working all summer to prepare for fall reopening of schools. This work has included untold hours spent by administrators, task force members and others to focus on accomplishing two chief goals for reopening: the delivery of a quality education to ALL students under conditions of safety and security for ALL students and staff. This is complicated work highly dependent on a vast number of puzzle pieces falling into place to form a picture of school reopening informed by these twin goals. On July 13th, the District shared with the board and the community the outline of its reopening plan (the frame) for reopening. It did so as early in the summer as it possibly could in order to provide students, families and staff with some important clarity upon which to base some initial plans. At that meeting, we described the significant work that would still need to happen AFTER July 13th in order to fill in more of the picture for school reopening. At last night's school board meeting, we did so.

What follows is a summary of the details that shared with the Merrimack School Board intended to expose more of the developing picture of school reopening in Merrimack.

MISSION AND EXPECTATION

- The Merrimack School District has two core missions:
- To provide a quality education to ALL its students
- To provide for the safety and security of ALL its students and staff

The COVID-19 pandemic has presented unique, and uniquely difficult challenges to the District's two core missions. However, the District's reopening plan is fully rooted in its expectation that it will meet and exceed these never before seen challenges, and with the active participation of the entire Merrimack School District community we will, in fact, achieve these core goals on behalf of ALL our learners and All those whose work in this District supports those learners.

ASSUMPTIONS

- The COVID-19 pandemic is evolving throughout the country and, at the moment, its course and impact on the operation of our schools cannot be fully predicted.
- The ability of our school and District community to flexibly adapt to changing conditions will be a critical component of the success of the District's reopening efforts.
- The District AND the parent/student community share responsibility for creating the conditions for success in the days, weeks and months to come.

GIVENS

- The District will provide services under a HYBRID model
 - 2 days of full day on location direct instruction
 - 2 days of full day remote extensions work
 - 1 full FLEX day
- The District will provide services under a fully remote model

- 2 days of full day direct instruction, provided remotely
 - 2 days of full day extensions work, provided remotely
 - 1 full FLEX day
- Students selecting the Hybrid model will be divided into two groups (A/B)
 - ½ of students, Group A, will attend school live two days while the other ½ of students will engage in remote extensions work. This will be achieved, primarily, alphabetically
 - Students selecting the fully remote model will be divided into two groups (C/D)
 - ½ of students, Group C, will receive direct instruction remotely while the other ½ of students, Group D, will engage in remote extensions work.
 - The first day of school for students will be Wednesday, September 9th. For some hybrid and fully remote students, this means that the first day of direct instruction will be September 14th
 - After school programs and extracurricular activities will be phased in ONLY as data and other information supports such an action
 - NO DECISION has been made yet regarding fall sports. The District will continue to take whatever direction is provided by NHIAA. The district's recommendations regarding sports will be provided to the Board at a special meeting next week
 - **Any** student or staff member with symptoms that COULD be COVID-19 related will be asked to self-isolate for a period of 14 days, per CDC guidance
- 2 custodians on day shift in each school
 - Disinfecting machines utilized each evening and deep cleaning daily
 - Arrival in district anticipated 8/31/2020
 - 5 portable hand washing stations per school that can be moved as needed
 - Arrival in district anticipated 8/13/2020
 - Plexi installation in office and nursing stations
 - Installation date anticipated 8/12/2020
 - Social distancing and hand washing signage
 - Hand Sanitizer in each classroom (refillable as needed)
 - Disinfectant wipes in each classroom
 - 1600 "one use only" masks (provided to students who forget their masks, lose them, break them etc.)
 - 1600 Merrimack Blue reusable/washable facemasks for all staff
 - 5 hand sanitizing pedestals in each school
 - Arrival in district anticipated 8/12/2020
 - Electronic thermometers for nurse and school visitor use ONLY
 - Shut off and bagged public water fountains and urinals (social distancing)
 - 500 plexi face shields (adult) and 500 plexi face shields (child) for those that find regular face masks challenging to wear all day

In addition to information shared at last night's board meeting by Assistant Superintendent Shevenell and myself (summarized above) there were three other presentations last night related to the emerging picture of school reopening. These presentations were provided by:

Heather Barker, Director of Student Services

Nancy Rose, Director of Technology and Library/Media

John Fabrizio, Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum, Instruction and Assessment

Please go to the District website at <https://www.sau26.org> to view the presentation from each of these District leaders. Taken together with the information shared above, the emerging picture of our school reopening plans continues to come into focus as the puzzle pieces begin to align. Still, however, there is more to do before September 9th. We anticipate a special meeting of the Merrimack School Board next week (date to be determined) at which time we will provide additional information concerning

- safety
- curriculum and instruction
- student services
- technology
- student and teacher schedules
- lunch and
- other information vital to District operations in the midst of this ongoing national health emergency

Finally, on July 28th and again last night, the Merrimack School Board vigorously discussed two proposed policies regarding masks. We are pleased to have worked together to find an enforcement tool for any such requirement since none has been provided, still, by the governor or any federal or state legislative authority. For any mask requirement to be effective it MUST be accompanied by a clear and strong enforcement mechanism. The board is exercising its due diligence by carefully reviewing its options relative to the mask requirement in schools and deliberating the issue in the context of our district's two main goals; the delivery of a quality education to ALL its students in the context of the safety and security of ALL its students and staff. The board will continue to seek to strike the appropriate balance in this regard and will take up this issue again at its special meeting next week.

We remain committed to partnering with our community to produce the best possible condition for school reopening and we look forward to continuing that active partnership in the days and weeks to come.

Stay well.

Mark McLaughlin
Superintendent