

Dear Families of Students in Grades 5-12~

One week from today Mastricola Upper Elementary School, Merrimack Middle School, and Merrimack High School will be open to full time in person learning. As you know, a plan to provide this opportunity had already been developed by administration and approved by the school board prior to the governor's executive order. Our preferred start date, May 3rd, was agreed to by the board for MMS and MHS. The board elected to require a start date of April 19th for grades 5-6. With the governor's order, we have moved up that start date for grades 7-12 to April 19th.

You may review the plan for grades 5-12 on the [district website](#).

To be clear, families of students in grades 5-12 have three options:

1. Return to in school learning five days a week
2. Learn concurrently (through zoom) every day or on any day as parents choose.
3. Learn remotely (REAL Program)

The second option, concurrent learning, is possible in part through the availability of VDO 360 camera technology that the district invested in late last year to support increased contact time between students and teachers while maintaining physical distancing through the cohort model during the second half of the school year. The governor's order is clear and we wish to be clear about it with you: In Merrimack, we will be open for full time in school learning beginning Monday, April 19th. Families may choose whatever option best suits their needs.

For the purposes of consistency and continuity of instruction it is best to establish and maintain a weekly routine and we encourage you to do so.

Throughout the pandemic, the safety of students and staff has been our top priority. It remains so today. Given the likely increase in the daily school population of students beginning next week, we will do all we can to maintain and enforce social distancing and other safety measures. That said, the governor's order makes clear that various safety measures, particularly around distancing, that we have been enforcing since the beginning of the pandemic, and that have been required by the state DHHS until recently, are now merely recommendations and not requirements. Nevertheless, we will continue to do what we can, despite the relaxed safety guidelines, to make sure that school remains a safe place for your students to learn in whatever way they choose to do so.

Finally, I attach for your reference a question and answer document provided by the Department of Education, under the governor's direction, concerning the latest executive order. While Merrimack did not submit any of the 60 questions included in the document, we certainly recognize the need for some clarity, especially around questions of safety and quarantine, and we share those questions and answers with you in the event you need additional clarification as well.

Further information regarding the upcoming return to in person learning options for grades 5-12 will be coming to you directly from your school's principal shortly.

Thank you.

Mark McLaughlin