

## CESD / COVID-19 FAQ

Q: If our county is designated “green”, why are we in a hybrid system?

A: We are a public school and have to follow the Maine Department of Education rules and Maine CDC guidelines. A “green” designation means schools may open for full in-person learning **IF** all DOE COVID-19 standards can be met. Those standards include universal masking, a certain standard of ventilation, and social distancing of *at least* 3 feet apart among children in most situations, *at least* 6 feet apart when eating or drinking, and *at least* 6 feet apart among adults. ([link to DOE info](#)) Our buildings do not allow us to meet those standards.

MDOE guidelines also include providing proper ventilation. We are using a federal grant to fund ventilation projects in our schools that began mid-February. Completion of these projects in late March will provide proper ventilation for our schools. Prior to the completion of these projects, ventilation standards prohibit full classes of students in our classrooms and hallways during the pandemic. Planning for ventilation projects has required submitting an application to the state for approval, securing equipment during a limited supply (due to the pandemic) situation, contracting with a company to complete the work, and creating a schedule during the school year that impacts student learning as little as possible.

Q: If social distancing/spacing is the issue, why not use other spaces in the schools and town, like town hall and TML?

A: Our school gyms are already being used for these purposes – extra learning spaces and eating spaces. TML is not open to the public, and town hall is only open in a limited capacity. Neither are viable options. However, if we could find double the classroom space somehow, we would also have to hire certified teachers to teach the children in those spaces. That is not a financially viable option.

Q: It seems like young (K-4) students would especially benefit from more in-person learning and may transmit COVID at a reduced rate. Have we considered different approaches for the different schools?

A: We have studied the possibility of providing elementary students with ½ days a week for four days a week, however, with a limited number of bus drivers and buses, the transportation schedule would actually reduce the amount of time that elementary students are in school. The principals and school nurses have measured and assessed each classroom for spacing possibilities. Our classrooms do not have the space that would be required to accommodate full classes with the required 3 feet of social distancing. Principals have also investigated the use of other spaces in the buildings. Currently most students at Pond Cove and CEMS are eating lunch in the cafeteria. The gym at CEMS is also being used for grades 7 and 8 student lunches. Physical education classes are still being held in the gym at Pond Cove (in compliance with MDOE guidelines) , so that space is not available for classrooms. Fire codes prohibit holding classes in hallways. All spaces have been investigated and analyzed for use throughout this school year.

Q: Why are some schools in Maine, and other states, able to go in person full time, while other schools are hybrid or remote?

A: Each state governs their own school systems. In Maine, public schools must abide by the rules of the Department of Education. Each school system in Maine is different, with different buildings (age, quality, structure, layout), student population, etc. Our aging buildings with small classrooms and narrow hallways are holding us back. The PC/MS cafetorium is a major barrier. We are on track to improve ventilation at all three schools this winter and spring, as that has also been an issue.

Q: After the plans were made over the summer and the school year started, have administrators, nurses, and teachers been on autopilot with no review or changes to the system?

A: There is no auto pilot during this pandemic. Teams are regularly reviewing every part of the current system and making changes as necessary. Quarantining that involves staff has required a great amount of time, looking at each situation and the implications separately, always creating plans that allow students to be in our buildings as much time as possible. This work was evident in our creative 2-wave transportation schedule that was used when transportation staff was impacted, and our creative solution to providing students with lunches during our renovation challenges. Both of these plans were shared with parents in communications from the Superintendent. Scheduling options are continually being discussed and reviewed, with creative ideas for roadblocks being investigated.

Q: If COVID-19 rates are going down steadily and transmission is very low in schools, why can't we get all our kids back into school full time, in person?

A: The Maine DOE standards have not changed. The DOE standards are likely the reason transmission is very low in our schools. When those standards change, we are ready to respond.

Q: Are our schools prepared to have students back full time, in person, at any point this year if the DOE standards change?

A: Yes, should MDOE standards change so that we could have our students safely back in school full time, we would be ready and happy to change back to a normal schedule.

Q: I heard the President of the United States say he hopes all students K-8 can get back to school, all the time, in person, in April. Is that going to happen in Cape?

A: We all hope that we can get our students back to school full time as soon as possible. The [New York Times](#) reported that the President was referring to beginning in-person teaching "at least one day week" in April. Many schools in the country have been "shuttered" (closed full time), and references to

opening schools are referring to allowing students to return in various hybrid models. Through much planning by school administrators and staff our schools have remained opened for the majority of the time throughout the 2021-2022 school year.

Q: I'm worried about learning gaps. What are the schools doing about that?

A: Teachers and administrators are regularly assessing students and looking carefully at that data. Extra staffing has been put into next year's budget proposal to address these needs and support students. ([link to SB presentation by Cathy and principals](#))

Q: My kids are suffering from all this social isolation, loss of time with family and friends, missing traditions and activities. Are the schools thinking about the mental health of students?

A: Yes! Social workers, and guidance counselors have continued to work with students, both in person and remotely throughout the pandemic. Parents who have concerns specific to their students, and who would like to request additional help should contact their Principals.

Q: Are our school and district leaders working on plans for next school year? What do those plans look like?

A: Yes! Our District and School 2021-2022 calendar has been prepared based on plans for students to return to school full time at the start of the school year. Ventilation projects are in progress to ensure proper ventilation in our schools in order to accommodate full classrooms of students. Return to school full time, at any time would be dependent on a change in MDOE guidelines for social distancing.

Q: I'd like to give input about fall 2021. How do I do that?

A: Again, we are planning to have students return to school full time at the start of the 2021-2022 school year, dependent on MDOE guidelines. Input can be provided to Principals or to the Superintendent of Schools.