

Return to School Committee
Thursday, May 13, 2021 @ 5:30 – 6:45 p.m. In-person and via zoom

In attendance: Jessica Berry, Jaime MacCaffray, Adam Bullard, Beth Giggey, Stephanie Simmons, Kate Bourne, Randy Elwell, Alane Kennedy, Amy Hufnagel, Kristin Falla, Paul Meinersmann, Mike Felton, Meghan Smith, Cassie Kilbride, Autumn Belajonas, Beckie Delaney, Shasta Minery

- **End of year protocols and events**

- Masks & social distancing, athletics, etc.
- Mike discussed masks outside at recess – students will continue wearing masks during recess due difficulty socially distancing. Mike shared that little league and middle level sports mask wearing guidelines are different than outside masks during school. No comments from group members.

- **Student Vaccinations**

- PenBay Medical Center contacted local superintendents to gauge districts' interest in offering vaccine clinics for students 12 and up whose parents want them to be vaccinated (e.g., schools transporting students to a vaccine clinic or PenBay staff at schools offering vaccines on-site). Thoughts from RtS committee?
- To be clear, St. George MSU is not mandating COVID vaccines for students
- DOE is coordinating a partnership with Pen Bay to offer vaccine clinics for schools in our area.
- It would be convenient for working parents.
- One member referenced past swine flu vaccine clinics – some kids were scared and as a teacher that is scary to think about.
- What if a child has an adverse reaction and the parent isn't there?
- It could be a bad experience for a child.
- What is the school's role in the vaccine roll out? Some kids will get vaccinated and some will not get vaccinated?
- Middle level students will know who is vaccinated and who isn't – there could be a division in how they treat each other.
- What about the possibility of partnering with the town (St. George EMS - Amy Drinkwater)?
- What about partnering with Pen Bay and doing a summer clinic?
- How can we make it accessible to working parents?
- Partnering with St. George EMS and offering vaccine during afterschool hours?
- Bussing students to a vaccine clinic makes some people concerned/uneasy.
- If EMS is able to do a clinic for eligible children, ideally schedule it on a Friday in case a student has side effects.
- Maybe a Friday after work to accommodate working families. Doing it locally seems like a good solution.

- RtS Committee agreed to have Mike explore the possibility of a local clinic for students before and/or afterschool so parents can take their own children to a clinic if they wish to. School will not be involved in transportation. Mike will reach out to Amy Drinkwater to see if a local clinic is possible.
- Maine DHHS and DOE have invited Maine schools to participate in a "pooled testing" program. In a recent [Priority Notice](#), the DOE explained the program as follows:

Pooled PCR testing is an efficient way to test large groups of students and staff in schools on a weekly basis. Pooled PCR testing involves collecting swabs from small groups of students, (class cohort), placing the swabs in a common test tube together in a "batch" or "pool" with no Personal Identifiable Information (PII). The pooled sample is tested for the detection of Covid-19. If a pool tests positive, the individuals in that pool (class cohort) will be tested using BinaxNOW or PCR testing. Any positive individual(s) would be sent home to begin a ten-day isolation period.

- Does this program make sense for our school community? Schools can sign up on a rolling basis through Fall 2021. More information is available on the DOE website:
 - [Pooled Testing Overview](#)
 - [Recorded Pool Testing Webinar](#)
 - [Guidance for Pool Testing K-12 Schools](#)
- Mike explained Pool Testing
- Questions/Thoughts on pool testing from RtS Committee:
 - One member asked how this would help us? What is the rationale for something like this? Goal is to catch students that are contagious and be able to keep students in school.
 - Kate B explained the difference between PCR and Antigen tests.
 - How would parents in the community feel about this?
 - Students would do the swabbing themselves once a week in their class.
 - One group member watched the webinar and shared the following info:
 - St. George MSU has been in in-person since Sept. without using pooled testing.
 - This will require additional time for teachers/school nurse/staff:
 - 10-15 minutes per classroom to swab each week
 - Contact families for consent and keep track of consent forms
 - Admin role to package tubes in shipping box
 - FedEx Dropoff
 - Monitor results and admin/school nurse communication with classroom teachers

- Do we really need pooled testing to keep our school open? It seems it would cause more disruption than anything. It could also create unnecessary fear and anxiety while waiting for results.
- How does our staff feel about pooled testing?
- Would a teacher be able to make the decision to opt their classroom out if a teacher did not want their classroom to participate?
- The program is new and other states are participating. However, no schools in Maine are currently participating in this program. Looking at the week of May 10th to roll this out in ME.
- Privacy/Confidentiality concerns.
- Our district has done a good job the way we have been doing it, why change it?
- One member shared that the vaccine may be eligible for younger students by the fall.
- It doesn't seem like the right time. Will we be able to do something like this later if we don't choose to do it at this time? Yes.
- The RtS committee is not recommending doing pooled testing at this time. Still a lot of questions and concerns about it. We will reassess it if needed.
- **Next year**
 - Masks & social distancing protocols and students moving between classrooms
 - At this time there is no change with masks or social distancing for next year. Other protocols may be relaxed by DOE (e.g., protocols for band, music, etc.). A lot can happen between now and the fall. However, we are planning for next year that we will have 6 ft distancing and mask wearing. Mike shared that this has led to conversations around class sizes and impact on the middle level.
 - We essentially need to have another teacher at the middle level if we have 6 middle level crews. We currently have 1 middle level group (crew) that attends Blueberry Cove every day. Looking into the possibility of funding an additional teaching position for middle level with grant/COVID money.
 - Should ML students be allowed to move between classes next school year? The younger grades will most likely be moving because they are one grade moving at a time. Middle Level all moves at the same time. There are high schools that have students changes classes.
 - One concern is the shared time in the hallway. Less concerned about desks being contaminated and the possibility of COVID be transmitted that way. When students pass in the halls there would be 60+ students in the hallways at once.
 - Are there outside paths that could help? Yes, students could go out the door by cafeteria and then back in art room door. They could also go out the gym door. However, that could involve a lot of planning, logistics, and additional supervision.

- It's not healthy for students to be sitting in the same classroom all day.
- At the high school, students carry everything in a backpack – no lockers.
- Several members would like to see the students being able to switch classes.
- Could they use lockers? Most likely no.
- If they could use outside paths that would be better.
- RtS group members would like to find a way for students to switch classes. Ok with using the hallways, but maybe find an alternative. Find alternative to using lockers such as backpack.
- We would like to get the kids moving.
- There could be a concern with kids going into another classroom right away after another class has been in there.
- We could be in an entirely different picture next fall with transmission.
- Would air purifiers in classrooms help reduce risks with students changing classes? Yes, most likely.
- Keep windows open as much as possible – anything you can do to ventilate.
- School upgraded ventilation system this year and now uses MERV 13 filters where possible.
- What about getting kids moving around more? Additional outside break instead of switching classrooms?
- What about K-5 specials? The hope is that K-5 specials will be outside of their home classroom? If so, where would the K-5 specials happen since Middle Level crews are using Art Room and World Language Room.
- Other schools may not have as small classes as we have so don't have a space issue.
- Air purifiers for classrooms
 - We upgraded our overall HVAC system.
 - Mike & Cassie have been researching air purifiers trying to determine best type for our school. Some stories about questions regarding effectiveness of air filters.
 - They can be effective in reducing the virus particles in the air.
 - If you can keep the classes/groups small that is important. Anything you can do to prevent each other from breathing others air.
 - Library has 5 purifiers throughout the building. They are quiet but effective and efficient. The ones the library has seem to be doing a good job. The purifiers tell you when filters need to be replaced.
 - Ionize air purifiers could generate ozone. Look at air purifiers that are using HEPA filters. Town office has also installed air purifiers.
 - Mike and Cassie will continue to get quotes on air purifiers and check in with town office and library.
- Community members access to school building for next year.
 - DOE may give us some guidance on this.

- Maintain current approach where access to the school building is limited. However, as always, things can change by fall.
 - We miss having the families in the building and community meetings.
 - Maybe have immediate family come in with screening.
 - If we have new students it would be helpful to let new parents come in to have a school tour. Le Kindergarten parents come in before school officially starts?
 - Do we want to have some type of station for adults coming into the building?
 - What about asking people if they are vaccinated?
 - Although things can change, at this time, we should not be asking members of the community and parents about their vaccination status when entering the building
 - Wouldn't people have to fill out a screening form whether they were vaccinated or not?
- 8th Grade Celebration:
 - Josh and Alison and ML team have been working on plan for 8th grade end of year celebrations.
 - Fun town and Monkey C Monkey Do.
 - June 15th - Outdoor 8th Grade Celebration