Dear Students, Parents, and Guardians,

Warm greetings from 7 Bird Street! I hope everyone has had a wonderful, adventurous, and restful summer. As we all soak up the last bits of beautiful weather, rest assured that our staff is busy making preparations for the beginning of the 2021-22 school year. As has been the case the past two school years, we continue to live in uncertain times. This letter is intended to provide important information as it pertains to Houlton Middle-High School.

- Our district continues to have staggered start dates for students. While the school year for students in Grades 6 and 9 will begin on Monday, August 30th, students in grades 7, 8, 10, 11, and 12 will not begin until Tuesday, August 31st. The purpose of this is to provide our Grades 6 and 9 students the opportunity to become acquainted with some of the changes that come with middle and high school.

- Unlike last school year, RSU 29 will not have a remote-learning option for students. Preparations have been made to operate at “normal” capacity and to return to in-person instruction for all students. As was the case prior to last year, a typical student day will begin at 8:09 AM and conclude at 2:25 PM.

- In compliance with federal CDC mandates, all students who opt to use district transportation will be required to wear masks while on a bus. This is a federal requirement and drivers are not permitted to transport students who cannot comply. Drivers will have spare masks, but we kindly ask that you provide face-coverings for your child.

- At their August 2, 2021 meeting, the RSU 29 Board of Directors voted to make masks/face-coverings optional. There will be a special meeting on Monday, August 23rd at 6 PM to further discuss this topic. The meeting will take place in the Houlton Middle-High School Auditorium.

Regardless of outcomes, plans have been made to optimize social-distancing, and the increased sanitation efforts that were instituted last fall will continue. Additional breaks, as necessary, will be given to students.

- Regarding laptops, device distribution will begin on August 23rd and conclude on August 27th. Prior to distribution, you and your student will need to have signed the district’s Acceptable Use Policy form. To expedite pick-up, you can use our online form, which can be found at the following address: https://forms.gle/kdX1nDalj2re9NPA. We will also have physical copies of the Acceptable Use Policy form when you come to pick up the machine(s). Please know that you MUST have your student(s) present as they too will need to sign the form. If you have any questions, please contact the district’s Technology Office at 207-538-3865.

- In compliance with Maine law LD 798, beginning this school year, all Maine students enrolled in grades Pre-K through 12 are required to be immunized against diphtheria, tetanus, pertussis, measles, mumps, rubella, polio and varicella. Additionally, all students enrolled in grades 7-12 must be immunized against meningococcal disease. The district’s Director of Nursing, Holly Hodgkins, has sent notification to the parents/guardians of students who are out of compliance with this law. Please know that students who have not met the state’s vaccination requirements will not be permitted to attend school until the proper vaccination records have been received. LD 798 also removes both philosophical and religious exemptions to immunization requirements. Medical exemptions are still allowed, and there is an exception for those students with an Individualized Education Plan, when applicable.

While I very much look forward to seeing students return for another school year, I also ask for your patience and understanding as we continue to live and work in very uncertain times. Our staff will continue to do our very best to provide a safe, high-quality learning environment for all students. We appreciate your cooperation as we embark on this new school year!

Best regards,

Tim Tweedie
Principal
Houlton Middle-High School