



# Easton School Department

Office of the Superintendent



Mark Stanley  
Superintendent of Schools  
mark.stanley@eastonschools.org

33 Bangor Road  
Easton, ME 04740  
(207) 488-7700 ext. 105

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Students, Staff, and Community Members of Easton,

I am writing to inform you of an update to our “Safe Return to School” plans that were released on August 10, 2021. **Effective on Monday, August 30, masks will be required for all students, staff and visitors inside both Easton School Department buildings until Harvest Break (September 17<sup>th</sup>).** During the break, the administrative team will re-evaluate and I will release an update prior to opening the schools to students on October 12.

This decision has not been made lightly. As you know Easton School Department has been in session for 8 school days. In that time we have seen a steady increase in the infection rate of COVID-19 in the area and the Maine CDC now classifies Aroostook County in the “High Level” of community transmission. Additionally, Easton School Department has been forced to place more than 30 students and staff in quarantine due to exposure to various positive cases. Many of our High School students now travel to neighboring tech schools and athletic events, increasing their exposure to students from communities across the central Aroostook region. Though student’s aged 12 and older are eligible for the vaccine, our students in the elementary school are not, placing them at further risk for illness.

The US Center for Disease Control highly recommends masking in all schools as one of the primary means of protecting students and staff from COVID-19.

On August 12, the CDC released a quarantining exemption for schools that institute a mask mandate. For Easton School Department, this means that in many classroom situations, students who are a close contact to a positive case will not need to quarantine from school for the usually required 10 days, allowing them to continue in-person instruction.

Keeping our students and staff healthy, safe, and in school for live, in-person instruction needs to be at the forefront of our decision-making. We will continue to work with local health institutions, the Maine Department of Education and the Maine Center for Disease Control to keep our schools safe while providing an excellent education to the young people of Easton.

Information regarding COVID-19 protocols and schools is continually changing, and I will communicate with you all when changes take place.

Yours in Education,

Mark Stanley, Superintendent of Schools