

KATAHDIN SCHOOLS RSU #89

Office of the Superintendent

800 Station Road Stacyville, ME 04777

Voice: 207-365-4272

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January 14, 2022

Good afternoon Katahdin families,

On January 12th, an update was made to the Standard Operating Procedures that schools are required to follow. The update allows schools who universally mask to eliminate the need for contact tracing.

This school year has been disrupted for all families and as KES families are aware, we have had a significant increase of quarantines since the return to school after winter break.

After much discussion with all of our stakeholders, the decision has been made to temporarily shift to universal masking (**KES only**) effective Tuesday, January 18th. This shift will eliminate the need for contact tracing allowing our current quarantine students to remain in school. The only students/staff who will be home are those who are actually sick.

Please talk to your students about this shift and the importance of wearing their mask while indoors at school. On Tuesday I will hold a whole school virtual assembly for KES students to talk to them as well as that is when we will have our quarantine students back in school.

The current guidelines for universal masking do not allow indoor mask breaks. In addition to recess, all students will have 2 additional mask breaks, one in the morning and one in the afternoon. This will be achieved through a structured outdoor learning lesson or simply an outdoor break.

Due to spacing requirements while eating we will also be shifting to eating back in the cafeteria. With our new lunch tables we can safely space students approximately 6 feet apart while they eat by having students sit in every other seat.

Thanks to all who participated in our survey regarding universal or optional masking. The results (63% feel that masking should continue to be optional; 37% feel that universal masking should be in place) were considered in this decision which is why we are only requiring universal masking at KES where whole classes have needed to be quarantined.

The following factors have been considered in making this decision:

- Increased case numbers at KES resulting in significant quarantines
- When an elementary student is positive, the entire class has had to quarantine
- Universal masking will eliminate the need for contact tracing & allow students to stay in school unless they are actually sick
- 227 responses (a combination of families; community; staff and 5-12 students); 63% vs. 37% in favor of continuing with optional masks

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We will monitor and report out bi-weekly and once we see a reduction in the numbers locally we will revert back to optional. Although many agree that we don't like masks, this will allow kids to stay in school unless they are actually sick. Additionally, KES students spend time outdoors learning and will not need the masks when outdoors.

It is clear that as we continue to navigate the challenges of these unprecedented times we need to work together to support a safe and consistent learning environment for our children.

If there are any questions or concerns please feel free to contact me at school.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Marie Robinson". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Marie Robinson, Ph. D.
Superintendent of Schools