

Return to School (RtS) Committee
Wednesday, February 9, 2021
MINUTES
4PM

Attendees: Mike Felton, Jess Berry, Adam Bullard, Kate Bourne, Rachel Wilcox, Beckie Delaney, Ashley Geel, Jennifer Garrett, Randy Elwell, Ashleigh Lunt, Liz Matthews

Resources:

[2021-2022 School Plan](#)

[Current SOP](#)

1) COVID Update

Jessica Berry shared that the school is seeing a sharp decrease in positive cases. There are approximately 5 positives per week. When returning from Christmas break the numbers were much higher.

- The school partnered with PenBay pharmacy to offer a vaccination clinic. Roughly 35 students/staff participated bringing our total vaccinated student population to 49%. We have around 9 more students that will be fully vaccinated within the next week which will bring our school % to 59% fully vaccinated.
- Currently we have had 63 positive student cases (33% of the student population)
- 35% of students who have tested positive have been fully vaccinated
- 95% or more of our students who have tested positive were exposed to COVID in the home. We are not seeing it spread in school.

The group appreciated the data, and discussed that this is really solid factual information that could be shared with the community.

2) February Break

- The school received another shipment of rapid tests bringing our total to 560.
- It was proposed that the Sunday before returning from break (Feb. 27th) that we offer a rapid testing clinic.
- Jennifer Garrett, Jess Berry, Joanna Schwab, Paul Meinersmann and Mike Felton facilitated the last clinic and agreed that it was helpful and families were appreciative
- Families shared at the last testing clinic that they hoped it was a regular practice
- Autumn and Jess are willing to organize the clinic

- It was suggested that rather than allowing students to test themselves that the adults running the clinic test to get a better sample.
- Kate Bourne & Rachel Wilcox agree that having Autumn or someone facilitating the clinic take the samples would help with consistent collection and results.
- Prior to vacation Jess Berry will send a letter to the community about the testing clinic
- It was recommended that we also share all of the data that we have collected about positives & vaccination %

3) Hybrid Plan Review & Discussion

- The plan update includes “to go” bags that are sent home immediately when the school is notified that a student will be out.
- To go bags decrease the amount of time families are waiting for their child’s work.
- When Autumn is contacted by a family about a student absence related to COVID (positive or exposure) she adds their name to a spreadsheet and then Adam notifies teachers that the work needs to be sent.
- Parents can come pick up the work or we can send it home
- It was suggested for long term absences that we provide a face to face or live check in for students
- Amy Hufnagel and Steph Simmons could be added to the plan to provide check ins with students and families

4) Considerations

Jess Berry shared that given our school has universal masking in place we no longer are required to quarantine students. We had several mitigating measures in place to prevent quarantining high numbers of students, however we no longer feel like that is needed due to masking/quarantine changes. We would like to take small steps forward to provide students with a sense of normalcy. Team leaders were asked to make recommendations of small changes they would like to see if we no longer had to keep students separated.

- Crossing Houses (peer mentors)
 - Allow middle level students to work with younger students, for example reading buddies, to foster a sense of leadership and community for our older students.
- Grouping in 6-8
 - Middle level would like the ability to work with more flexible grouping, i.e., mixing students from different crews in their classes.

- Inside Recess (Gym)
 - When students have to be inside for morning recess in the gym it's very difficult to keep them separated by class. If they are masked, we would like them to be able to play across the gym and not in small sectioned spaces.
- Inside Recess (Classrooms)
 - During designated afternoon recess if students have to be inside, the proposal is to keep them in their houses but allow them to intermingle in classes. Example: K/1 and K could mix up to play together.
- Lunch Room (6-8) - include more students
 - Currently middle level cannot all fit in the cafeteria due to the number of students and spacing for safety.
 - Can we fit more students in and keep space?
 - Students have to rotate eating in classrooms which means staff have to monitor, clean up etc.
- Staff Meetings
 - When asking what staff would like to change if we started to relax our mitigating measures around staff/students being together an overwhelming amount of staff stated that they miss staff meetings and being all together.
 - Can staff choose to join via Zoom if they are worried about health/safety - YES.
- Can kids eat breakfast in the cafeteria again?
 - Currently students eat in their classrooms at 7:50.
 - Can grade levels stay separated in the cafeteria while eating breakfast so there are still some safety precautions? YES
 - Adam & Jess will talk with Janet and teachers to make a plan to begin breakfast in the cafeteria after Feb. break.
- Do kids need assigned seats in the cafeteria?
 - Rachel & Kate recommended easing into relaxed expectations. Students should stay within their classes.
 - If at all possible have students eat and then mask back up
 - Students do not need assigned seats within their own classrooms
 - Next steps for reducing mitigation measures could take place when windows can be open and they can eat outside - would make it safer for classes to intermingle
 - If parents do not want their children mixed can we offer alternative options?

5) MASKING

- States are ending masking mandates and giving districts the authority to determine if masking and protocols should stay in place
- Maine does not have a masking mandate. Masking is already a choice of each district. However, CDC rules **require** close contacts to quarantine for 10 days IF the school does not require universal masking.
- Locally we have our RtS committee in place which allows community members, parents, staff and administrators to discuss such issues and then the RtS Committee makes recommendations to the school board.
- Community members are talking about the school and masking
- Voices opposed to masking will probably grow as more states dropping masking mandates
- Currently the Maine CDC/SOP dictates that schools either universally mask or quarantine students
- Hearing all voices and opinions is important - this committee will have to process it all and make recommendations that are in the best interest of our school community
- A letter will be sent to the community next week about the data we have gathered and our steps towards normalcy. Masking allows us to move forward with these changes.
- Concern raised that masking of our youngest students is delaying their speech development
- Kate & Rachel both agreed that masking is keeping students in school, healthy and research has not, at this time, demonstrated that masks negatively impact students
- A smaller team will meet to discuss developing benchmarks that would have to be met to remove masks.
- Benchmarks could be county COVID cases, cases within the school etc.
- The whole team agreed that we want to continue discussion and planning for the potential of SOP requirements becoming recommendations

The committee will meet again after February break to discuss masking and benchmarks further.

