

## **Frequently Asked Questions**

**3/9/22**

### **Masking/Pooled Testing**

Q: When will mask become optional for students and Staff regardless of vaccination status?

A: Wednesday, March 9, 2022.

Q: Will students and staff have the individual choice to wear a mask?

A: Yes, beginning March 9th, anyone may wear a mask. The school department will not tolerate teasing, bullying, or harassment of students or staff who make this choice.

Q: Am I allowed to require my entire class to wear a mask when in my classroom?

A: No.

Q: Is masking required for extracurricular activities?

A: No, masking will be optional for all school-sponsored events.

Q: Will the district continue with pooled testing?

A: Yes, at this time pooled testing will continue.

Q: Do pre-k students have the choice of optional masking as well?

A: Yes

Q: What is our responsibility if a parent asks us to make sure their child wears the mask, but the student doesn't want to when they get to school?

A: Parents are welcome to create an awareness of their preferences with our instructional faculty, but our teachers, ed techs, bus drivers, coaches and administrators can not assume the added responsibility of tracking parents' preferences on an individual basis.

### **Transportation**

Q: What are the masking guidelines for student transportation?

A: Effective February 25, 2022, CDC does not require wearing of masks on buses or vans operated by public or private school systems, including early care and education/child care programs. The school department will no longer require masks on buses, vans, and other school department vehicles in which more than one person travels on Wednesday, March 9, 2022.

Q: Do we need to continue using seating charts on buses?

A: The transportation department may assign seats as needed, or is practicable, on school department vehicles. Drivers and bus aides will not be responsible for creating segregated buses with "masked" and "unmasked" students. Medically fragile students may have a designated seating area; health accommodations involving a mask will be addressed through the 504 process.

### **Contract Tracing and Data Points**

Q: What data points should the district consider to determine the levels of the virus within the community?

A: We have asked the Maine CDC if they have identified any state-wide or community-specific thresholds for case counts, absence rates (as a percentage), viral loads in wastewater, etc. Because one size doesn't fit all, the CDC left that work to individual communities, using the federal CDC heat maps as a cornerstone, along with the aforementioned factors.

Q: Will this lead to us going back to contact tracing since our school will no longer be universally masking and potentially lead to more students being in and out of quarantines again?

A: The Maine CDC no longer engages in the practice, and told a group of Superintendents that at "this stage of the pandemic" the strategy is neither feasible nor impactful.

Q: How will masking requirements for students who return from quarantined be managed?

A: Students who are returning from quarantine are required to mask days 6-10, per Maine CDC. School nurses will be the point of contact for families in this situation.

Q: Will the district continue to document positive COVID cases?

A: Yes.

Q: Will we continue to provide notification to families about positive cases?

A: We will continue to notify the public of school-based cases for the foreseeable future.

### **Spacing Between Students**

Q: What are the recommendations for student spacing within the classroom?

A: There is no spacing requirement in classrooms.

Q: Will our gyms and afterschool events have ANY capacity limits while indoors?

A: No

Q: Are there any restrictions on the playground with student spacing or the use of playground equipment?

A: No.

Q: Do all students have to continue to face the same direction?

A: No. This is not a requirement.

Q: Do we need to continue to use seating charts in the classroom?

A: This is not a requirement, but may be prudent.

## **School Procedures**

Q: Will volunteers and guests be allowed back into the buildings? Do they have to be vaccinated?

A: Volunteers and guests are welcome back in our schools. We are respectfully asking that they assert their wellness before entering the building.

Q: Will IEP/parent meetings continue to be remote or in-person?

A: A hybrid is likely for the time being. In many cases, a pandemic notwithstanding, remote IEPs have worked well for families.

Q: Will we host school assemblies or whole school activities?

A: Principals have been granted permission to begin to phase these activities back in, including traditional end-of-year gatherings, events, and activities. As the weather improves, we will once encourage outside activities.

Q: Can students be placed in different groups while in the classroom?

A: Group activities are permissible. We will not group students by masked and unmasked.

Q: Will students be excused for COVID close contacts without symptoms?

A: Guidelines for close contacts are included in Maine's SOP for COVID-19 cases. We will continue use this as a guide.

Q: Will we continue with Google Classroom?

A: Yes, the school department will continue to make Google Classroom available for students and staff.

Q: Will water fountains be open for student use?

A: Fountains will need to be cleaned, serviced, and have extensive testing prior to reopening. This work will be completed based on the capacity of our maintenance staff and vendor-partners.

Q: Will the district continue to use student desk shields?

A: No, unless required by 504 or IEP

Q: Are field trips allowed?

A: Yes.

Q: Can students share materials within the classroom?

A: Yes.

Q: Are we allowed to share food in the classroom?

A: Yes. We will return to pre COVID expectations and it will be at teacher discretion.

Q: Do we need to continue to use 1-way hallways?

A: Principals will make this building-based decision. Students and staff have been habituated to this traffic pattern, and in some schools has proven beneficial for secondary reasons. Some schools may also elect to keep these traffic patterns in place until the new school year begins.

Q: Can we bring carpets into the classroom to set up meeting areas?

A: Yes.

Q: Can we do events with other schools in our district?

A: On a space-available basis.

Q: What are the requirements for singing and playing musical instruments?

A: These activities will continue with masks being optional.