

# RSU 1 Fall Reopening Plan

Proposal for RSU 1 School Board of Directors  
August 3, 2020



## RSU 1 Priorities for Fall School Model

The following priorities have guided our school redesign work since May:

- Ensuring the health and safety of students and staff
- Providing the best possible education to every student
- Recognizing the importance of family and work schedules

## Community and Staff Input

Since May, we have formed many committees and collected much feedback to ensure we are making the best choices on behalf of families and staff for what next year will look like. Three types of committees have met: the community and school board based distance learning committee, school based fall teacher planning committees at each building, and a districtwide fall reopening committee. We have also surveyed staff and families two times and students once to collect feedback and ideas on this work. Thank you to all staff, school board members, families, and community members who contributed to these efforts. We are so appreciative to have such supportive and helpful participation in RSU 1.

Of these groups, there is one that has continued its work into the summer. The districtwide reopening committee has been meeting on a regular basis with the goal of presenting recommendations to the school board in early August. The committee is composed of teachers, administrators, school board members, parents, public health officials, emergency management personnel, public safety officials, nurses, and a student representative. Committee members have devoted extensive time and their collective wisdom has helped the district consider many different options.

End-of-Year Family, Staff, and Student Survey [Results](#)

Summer Family and Staff Survey [Results](#)

Members of all committees can be found by clicking this [Link](#).

## Maine DOE County Categorization

As stated on the Maine Department of Education Website, “To inform local school administrative unit (SAU) decisions about whether and how to bring students back into the classroom, Maine Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) and Center for Disease Control and Prevention (Maine CDC) have developed a system to categorize counties. This categorization is based on a holistic assessment of quantitative and qualitative information. It includes, but is not limited to, recent data on case rates, positivity rates, and syndromic data (e.g., symptoms of influenza or COVID-19).

**Categorization as “red” suggests that the county has a high risk of COVID-19 spread and that in-person instruction should not be conducted.**

**Categorization as “yellow” suggests that the county has an elevated risk of COVID-19 spread and that hybrid instruction models should be adopted.**

**Categorization as “green” suggests that the county has a relatively low COVID-19 risk and that in-person instruction can be adopted – although a SAU may opt for hybrid instruction if its buildings or readiness make adhering to the required Health and Safety Measures for All Schools a challenge.**

The initial three-tiered health advisory system will be initially posted on July 31, and updated every two weeks. These recommendations are advisory. Given the large and varied nature of counties in Maine, SAUs within a county may adopt a reopening policy that differs from this county-based categorization of COVID-19 risk. Maine DHHS and Maine CDC will not review SAU-specific plans.”

(Citation: <https://www.maine.gov/doe/framework/part-1>)

The current status of Sagadahoc County as of July 31 is “**green.**”

## Districtwide Health and Safety Expectations

The below expectations are set forth by the Maine Department of Education as a requirement for all Maine public PK-12 schools. The full document from which these are copied can be found here: [MDOE Link](#). RSU 1 plans to carefully follow all expectations to ensure the safety of our school community.

### Symptom Screening Before Coming to School

- Students (parents/caregivers) and staff members must conduct [self-checks for symptoms](#) prior to boarding buses or entering school buildings each day. Schools should provide information to families in their primary language to support them in conducting this check.
- Any person showing symptoms must report their symptoms and must not be present at school.
- Schools must provide clear and accessible directions to parents/caregivers and students for reporting symptoms and absences.

### Physical Distancing and Facilities

- Adults must maintain 6’ of distance from others to the extent possible. Maintaining 3 ft distance is acceptable between and among students when combined with the other measures outlined in this list of safety requirements.

- 6' physical distancing is required for students while eating breakfast and lunch, as students will be unable to wear masks at that time.
- A "medical isolation room" must be designated for students/staff who exhibit COVID-19 symptoms during the school day.
- Schools should evaluate their existing ventilation capabilities and ensure that they are maximizing their current capacity. Adequate ventilation is required for classrooms, with schools having flexibility in implementation such as using properly working ventilation systems or outdoor air exchange using fans in open windows or doors.
- Groups in any one area, room, or classroom must not exceed the Governor's gathering size limits.

#### Masks/Face Coverings

- Adults, including educators and staff, are required to wear a mask/face covering (masks may not have vents to allow for direct exit of breath as it is exhaled).
- Students age two and above are required to wear a mask/face covering that covers their nose and mouth.
- Masks/face coverings must be worn by all students on the bus.
- Face shields may be an alternative for those students with medical, behavioral, or other challenges who are unable to wear masks/face coverings. The same applies to staff with medical or other health reasons for being unable to wear face coverings. Face shields worn in place of a face covering must extend below the chin and back to the ears.

#### Hand Hygiene

- All students and staff in a school must receive training in proper hand hygiene.
- All students and staff must wash hands or use sanitizing gel upon entering the school, before and after eating, before and after donning or removing a face mask, after using the restroom, before and after use of playgrounds and shared equipment, and upon entering and exiting a school bus.

#### Personal Protective Equipment

- Additional safety precautions are required for school nurses and/or any staff supporting students in close proximity, when distance is not possible, or when students require physical assistance. These precautions must at a minimum include eye protection (e.g., face shield or goggles) and a mask/face covering.
- Classrooms and/or areas that have been used by an individual diagnosed with COVID-19 must be closed off until thorough cleaning and sanitization takes place.

## Grades PK-5 Proposed Plan

The following plan is proposed for grades PK-5:

- All students in-person 100% of the time for grade levels PreK-5 with health and safety measures in place
- Student desks and tables will be a minimum of three feet apart and all students will wear masks as per the Maine DOE requirements
- Students will spend the day with the same pod of students in their classroom
- The majority of specialists will come into the classrooms to teach rather than have student pods share classrooms

- Students will be given safe mask-free and movement breaks throughout the day to help them with the new desk and classroom arrangements that allow for safety, yet are more structured than normal
- Lunch will be brought to the rooms or individual classes will go to the cafeteria to pick up their lunches at specific times. Recess will likely run during lunch, with half the class eating in the room and half the class outside since masks will be off. In some schools, where space and social distancing allows, students will be able to safely eat in the cafeteria as well.
- Recess will be done by individual classroom pods
- Two bus runs will take place to accommodate 50% of students on the buses at any one time. One group will arrive at approximately 8:20am and the other group at 9:20am. The 8:20am group will be dismissed at approximately 2:15pm and the 9:20am group will be dismissed at approximately 3:15pm. We are exploring other bus schedules with Bath Bus Service. Parents are encouraged to transport their students.

## Grades 6-12 Proposed Plan

The following plan is proposed for grades 6-12:

- A hybrid model blending in-person learning (2 days per week) with remote learning (2 days per week) for grades 6-12. The likely configuration of days will be a M/Th in-person or T/F in-person. The fifth day will be used for teacher planning, student work catch-up and further learning, and teacher office and study hall hours. This fifth day will allow for opportunities to connect and receive help from staff. Small groups of high need students will come in on this fifth day to receive services or support should they be struggling.
- Morse High School will have a semester course schedule to reduce the number of student groups at one time.
- Bath Tech will be following a similar schedule and will be in touch with all sending schools to coordinate a program for students. More information will be coming out to families soon.
- Only 50% of students are in school and on buses at any one time. Students will be divided into two groups at each school alphabetically. Adjustments will be made for siblings at various levels.
- Bussing will be provided at the usual morning time, but dismissal will be at approximately 1:15pm as we need to accommodate for two elementary bus runs. Parents are encouraged to transport their students. In the case of WCS, since it is a PK-8 school that runs on one schedule, WCS 6-8 will run on the PK-5 bus schedule.
- Student desks or tables will be a minimum of three feet apart and all students will wear masks as per the Maine DOE requirements
- While students will need to access different teachers by subject, every effort will be made to reduce student movement and regrouping so it happens the minimum amount of times possible
- Bi-directional single-file travel will be implemented in all halls. Stairwells will be reduced to one-way traffic whenever possible.
- Students will be given safe mask-free and movement breaks throughout the day to help them with the new desk and classroom arrangements that allow for safety, yet are more structured than normal
- Lunch will be brought to the rooms or individual classes will go to the cafeteria to pick up their lunches at specific times.

- Attendance will be mandatory and tracked. Grading will follow usual RSU 1 grading procedures. In addition to lessons, check-ins with teachers will happen on a regular basis (likely Wednesdays) via video chat for both connection and support.

## Full Distance Learning Plan

Full-time distance learning will be available for families who are uncomfortable with in-person learning for their students. The below plan is an initial outline for this situation as much more data needs to be collected regarding staff and students who will be making this request. Should a family choose this option, they will need to make a commitment by August 17th and this plan will last through the December break.

For grades PK-5, students will likely be matched with a teacher who is able to be their main contact and primary educator for most subjects. Students in grades 6-8 will likely be matched with two core educators. One will be focused on math/science and one will be focused on the humanities teaching. Students in grades 9-12 will be following along with the 2 days of distance learning their peers are doing and will either tune into the lessons virtually that their teacher is providing during the in-person days or will have a main teacher contact for all subjects, similar to grades 6-8.

In each of these scenarios, students will have a set weekly schedule with synchronous and asynchronous lessons where they will be following regular, grade level coursework. Assignments and assessments will be done through RSU 1's digital systems and programs. Attendance will be mandatory and tracked. Grading will follow usual RSU 1 grading procedures. In addition to lessons, check-ins with teachers will happen on a regular basis via video chat for both connection and support.

Should a family choose this plan, the teacher/s your student has may be from a school other than the one they normally physically attend as we want to ensure they are matched with someone who can best teach their grade level and needed courses.

Once the Board of Directors approves a fall school plan, families will receive a survey to enable them to indicate if they will be choosing this option.

## Improvements to Distance Learning

Parent, student, and staff surveys were created and shared with the community to gather feedback on distance learning. An over twenty person committee met weekly to vet the survey, analyze the results, and create fourteen recommendations for the school board and administrative team to consider for any future use of distance learning.

1. More consistent use of purchased digital learning platforms, K-8
2. Purchase one digital portal for logging into for all distance learning
3. Provide clear directions and support for parents on how to use digital tools and also what new distance learning plan will look like (possible video)

4. Provide increased access to teachers for direct instruction and emotional support
5. Tighten requirements within each grade level to ensure more consistent approach to learning for all students with clear weekly schedules that are developmentally appropriate
6. Increase accountability: both for grading and attendance (while also continuing to consider the “hold harmless” mindset balanced with how to keep students motivated)
7. Increase communication from teachers, especially through virtual meetings and teaching times that have fewer students on the screen together for more individualized attention and participation.
8. Ensure that whatever digital programs and improved teacher schedules we plan allow for student-driven differentiation and flexibility
9. Ensure daily overview of student work plans is clear for both students and families.
10. Communication with families via phone and virtual meetings to provide feedback about students as well, not just over email (ex. Short virtual conference, when needed)
11. Create further opportunities for students to get the mental health support they need (connect to MCA, mental health walks, building based student support team meetings weekly, etc.)
12. As the distance learning schedule is determined, check in with teachers about what needs to be ordered for students learning in all classes to occur, including the potential purchase of more digital texts and resources.
13. In addition to an improved accountability with grading, provide guidance to teachers about alternative ways feedback can be given to students virtually (Flipgrid, etc.) to increase student engagement and better monitor learning from afar.
14. Once the model for school is designed, ensure fair delegation of responsibilities across all staff roles

We feel we can carry out all fourteen committee recommendations and have begun to put plans in place to address student connections, clearer expectations, more accountability, and more streamlined communication. With the purchase of our new learning management system, Brightspace, on which students, staff, and families will receive training, we will be able to have one location and sign on. Through Brightspace, families can get messages, “meet” with staff, complete assignments, connect to virtual classrooms, see grades, check schedules, and connect to a portal for all digital curriculum sites. This will greatly increase the ease with which students and families are able to connect with and organize their distance learning experience.

For access to the presentation given to the School Board with all distance learning recommendations and graphs, click [here](#).

## **Bussing, Cleaning, and Ventilation**

### **Bussing**

- We have been working very closely with Bath Bus regarding getting students to school safely. Students will use hand sanitizer when then get on as well as off the bus. All students and the drivers will wear masks at all times. The windows will be kept open (even slightly in the winter) to promote better ventilation. Students will sit one to a seat unless they are siblings. Buses will be wiped down for sanitization purposes between rides.

### **School Cleaning**

- Since the onset of the virus, we have worked closely with Benchmark Cleaners to stay on top of sanitizing high touch surfaces for the safety of staff and students. In addition to the staffing increase we made in the spring to allow for deeper cleaning of our buildings, we will also be looking to further grow our cleaning staff with additional state funds. Frequent high touch area and bathroom cleaning will be the main focus of these new hires.
- Classrooms and offices will be provided with surface cleaners, wipes, and hand sanitizer to have on hand.

#### Ventilation

- The district plans to consult with an outside contractor to ensure ventilation is sufficient in classrooms. We will be identifying spaces that need to be improved and consider filtration upgrades and ionizer options. Windows will be kept open when weather permits. Classroom fans will also be allowed for improved ventilation.

## Overall, School Will Look Different

To continue to promote the safest conditions for staff, students, and our community, the above will not be the only changes. Some other examples of how school will look different include, but are not limited to:

- All meetings and conferences with families, outside providers, and contractors will take place remotely.
- All bussed field trips, with the exception of Bath Tech, will not be happening.
- Volunteers and visitors will not be allowed until further notice.
- Classroom organization and management will be highly structured in a way to maintain social distancing at all times.
- Students will need to enter buildings through assigned entries to ensure proper hand sanitization upon arrival.
- Student movement throughout the building will be greatly reduced.
- Traffic patterns will be in place to keep physical distancing in hallways, etc.
- There will be no large assemblies.
- All water fountains will be made inoperable.
- Students will not have access to their lockers.