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September 8, 2020

Elementary Families,

The Maine Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) and Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) re-categorized York County from green to yellow last Friday due to an increase in the number of COVID-19 cases per capita, a positivity rate three times above the state average and five new outbreaks in York County over the last two weeks. A number of new cases in York County are not easily traceable to known outbreaks, suggesting an increase in community transmission. In Sanford, we also had a teacher at one of our elementary schools test positive for COVID-19 yesterday.

I am very concerned about this increased level of community risk. Under the “yellow” designation, the Maine Department of Education recommends that districts consider additional precautions such as limiting the number of people in school buildings, suspending extracurricular or co-curricular activities (including competitions between schools) and limiting unnecessary interaction by grouping students and staff based on the unique needs of each school community.

Our hybrid option for elementary students allowed students in grades Kindergarten through grade 4 to attend school in person every day unless circumstances changed. Circumstances have changed. We are in the process of dividing students in grades K - 4 into A and B groups.

- Group A students will attend school physically on Monday & Thursday
- Group B students will attend school physically on Tuesday & Friday
- Special education students with an IEP receiving specially designed instruction in the content areas or social skills will attend instruction Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, and Friday
- Based on our current Pre-K enrollments, Pre-K students will attend in-person learning Monday through Friday.

We are keeping families aligned that also have students in grades 5-12 so that siblings are on the same schedule. We will send both a written and a verbal announcement regarding assigned groups this evening to all elementary families. If families have a conflict with their group assignment and want it changed, we ask them to e-mail Schoolinfo@sanford.org as soon as possible and we will do our best to accommodate. We will be sending an updated opening of school schedule for elementary students to families tomorrow that will still have students return in phases and smaller groups. Kindergarten will still start later than the other grades.

When group A or group B students are not physically in school, they will be expected to attend morning meetings and to check-in with their classroom teachers. Students will receive a daily schedule including independent learning activities for use on remote learning days. The expectation is for students to complete 2-3 hours of independent learning each day. Our schools will utilize this A/B schedule until circumstances change.

I realize that the timing of this decision is less than ideal and I truly understand how difficult this may be for your family but I believe it is the right thing to do in light of current circumstances.

Sincerely,

Matt Nelson
Superintendent of Schools