



**Regional School Unit 13
Office of the Superintendent**

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Dear Families and RSU 13 Community Members:

It hardly seems possible that schools have been opened for two months now. I write today to update you on information regarding our operational plans and protocols given the surge of cases of COVID-19 in our county and surrounding towns. Today's letter contains quite a bit of information, but I felt it important to include considering the rapidly changing nature of the pandemic and in light of the fact that Maine is now experiencing community spread of the virus according to the Maine CDC.

Governor's Executive Order

On Tuesday, October 6, Governor Janet Mills announced Executive Order #14, which can be viewed in its entirety here:

<https://maine.us2.list-manage.com/track/click?u=a582edd6473e477ef6307c769&id=67be1e8c4a&e=f41ea4e9bb>

What this means for our families is that face coverings (cloth facemasks) must be worn in all publicly accessible areas of schools and everywhere on school grounds (parking lots, playgrounds, walkways, entryways, etc.) unless students are overseen by staff during a regulated outdoor mask break such as recess. Parents exiting vehicles, or approaching staff or the school building, are asked to adhere to this executive order as well as families using school grounds such as the playground after school hours.

Regarding Off-Site Learning and Edmentum

With the rising cases of COVID-19 in Knox, we have received an increase in inquiries regarding a switch to Off-Site Learning. Our first semester enrollment period started the week prior to school starting and went through the first two weeks of school closing on September 18. Our current licensing is structured by semester, and at this point, we are close to half way through the first semester. So far, we have only purchased first semester licensing for this first half of the school year. We have not laid out options for opting in at the semester close yet (which is slated for the end of January) because it will really depend on the landscape of the district as we get to that point. Families will be notified in advance when and if an option to switch to Edmentum for Off-Site Learning will be available. It is likely that families who started the year in Edmentum will have the opportunity to continue Off-Site in Edmentum should they choose. In terms of concerns around the recent local rise in cases, our district continues to take all precautions outlined in our ReOpening plan and we are prepared to follow a Standard Operating Procedure provided by the Maine CDC should we have a positive case. Should our county designation shift from green to yellow or to red, we also have plans outlined for those scenarios as well.

As we continue to hear about how our neighboring districts have been experiencing COVID-19 cases, we recognize that the virus knows no boundaries. While we have been very fortunate so far due to your vigilance and honest communication, we are sending this reminder to be extra vigilant about safety

precautions, including outside of school and on weekends. Please ensure that you take the time each morning to complete the prescreening tool, and if your child has any hint of a symptom, please keep them home. We hope to continue to keep our students in school just as we started this year, but it takes everyone in our school community doing their part. Let's work together to ensure our schools stay open and as safe as possible.

This is also a good opportunity to remind you all once again that we have extensive and detailed plans on responding to outbreaks of COVID-19, or changes in the transmissions in our communities. We continue to update and improve on these plans as we learn more from our neighboring districts and schools across the state who have already been shifting into different scenarios. We also would like to share an update from Dr. Mark Eggena of Pen Bay Medical Center who speaks with Village Soup reporter, Dan Dunkle, about COVID-19 in our region. The full clip includes important information about keeping the community safe as well as what to expect, but Dr. Eggena also discusses local schools' heroic response to the pandemic:

<https://knox.villagesoup.com/p/dr-mark-eggena-provides-a-covid-19-update-oct-22/1874347>

In brief, he shares that even in schools that have had a positive case in our region, the transmission is not happening in the schools due to the measures such as face coverings and distancing that schools have been putting in place to protect staff and students.

The issues in our neighboring school districts, however, continue to underscore the need for our families to be informed and familiar with how our school system will respond to various scenarios. One of those is a response to an individual, be it a student or staff member, who had been deemed a Close Contact. The definition of a Close Contact is as follows:

Being within 6 feet of an infected person (with or without a face mask) for at least 15 minutes (in aggregate for certain situations like athletics), or having unprotected direct contact with secretions or excretions of a person with confirmed COVID-19 during the infectious period.

Staff or students that are in fact close contacts are required to quarantine for fourteen days prior to returning to school or work regardless of a negative test result.

Finally, a reminder to parents on the protocols to follow should your child present symptoms of COVID-19 and need to stay at home. They are:

Student Out Sick (Updated 9/24/2020)

- If a student has a most common symptom or two of the less common symptoms, they will stay home and family will call their health care provider.
- Family will report symptom(s) to school and this will go into the school's COVID Tracking Tool.
- In order to return to school, one of the two following criteria must be met:
 - Present a clearance note from your medical provider to your school nurse and be 24 hrs. symptom free without the use of medication.
 - If you choose not to contact your provider, your child must meet the CDC criteria of being 10 days since the start of symptoms, 24 hours fever free < 100.4 F without the use of fever reducing medications, and have improved symptoms.

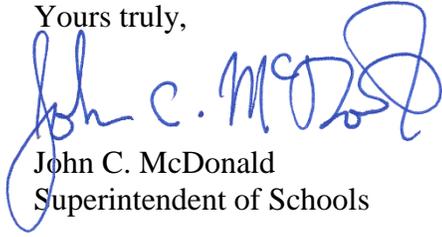
All medical documentation will be kept in the nurse's office.

For a copy of the pre-screening tool and most common symptoms go here:

https://www.maine.gov/doe/sites/maine.gov.doe/files/inline-files/Pre-Screening%20Tool_4.pdf

I want to assure you, that we remain vigilant for changes in the situation regarding COVID-19 transmission rates in our communities, as well as prepared for a response to individualized cases of COVID-19. In any event, we will communicate swiftly and appropriately with you, the families and community members. The health and safety of our students, faculty, staff and community members is primary to our mission and daily operations of our schools. Should you have questions or concerns, please feel free to reach out to me at any time.

Yours truly,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "John C. McDonald". The signature is stylized and cursive, with the first letters of each name being prominent.

John C. McDonald
Superintendent of Schools