

# SCHOOL UNION 76

BROOKLIN – DEER ISLE-STONINGTON CSD – SEDGWICK

251 N. DEER ISLE ROAD, UNIT 1, DEER ISLE, ME 04627

Office of the Superintendent

Telephone (207) 348-9100 Fax (207) 348-9103

*“Public Schools not only serve the public, they make the public.”*

## Superintendent’s Memo

To: SU 76 Parents & Guardians

From: Christian M. Elkington

Re: Four Updates and a Plea for Cooperation and Understanding!

Date: 7-17-2020

I hope this note finds you and your family well as we start to get into some “real” Maine Weather!

I have the following important updates to share with you:

### **SUMMER REOPENING PLANNING COMMITTEE WORK**

Planning for the return to school in SU76 began in late May when we started to gather all available reopening information and guidance. This effort continues on a daily basis. The planning process continued with beginning the process to create an overall reopening plan. A Steering Committee was formed to advise me and the School Boards on how to proceed with reopening our schools. Subcommittees also were formed to address, in detail, specific areas of concern (Instruction, Food Service, Operations & Maintenance, Student Activities, Transportation). Planning templates were provided to each subcommittee, outlining the questions that must be addressed in order to reopen. The Steering Committee and subcommittees are comprised of representatives from administration, school board chairs, parents, union leadership, and our professional and support staff. As key components of the plan are discussed in sub-committees other staff or community members will/may be included, as needed.

The Steering Committee’s goal is to have proposals for reopening our schools ready to be presented to the school boards by the week of August 10<sup>th</sup>. We understand parents’/guardians’ need to plan for the beginning of school and we will communicate parts of the plan that we can be reasonably sure of as early in August as possible.

Our planning is based around three options for school to return in September:

#### **Option 1**

All families and students will be given the choice of returning to in-person, in-school learning or to continue instruction remotely. *In-person option:* Instruction involving classrooms, schedules, transportation along with cleaning/sanitizing protocols for the buildings and buses will be adjusted to meet as many health guidelines as possible. *On-line option:* Instruction for grades 3-12 will be “live” (Synchronous) where students will participate real time with their teacher and class. Grades PreK – 2 students will have the option of watching taped lessons (Asynchronous) at other times than when the class is in session, and interaction with a teacher or staff member will be scheduled at a different time.

Many details still need to be worked on!

### **Option 2**

Same as Option 1, with students learning both in-person and/or remotely, but depending on numbers of families/students choosing the online version in Grades PreK - 2, students may be grouped by grade level or in a multi-age grade level grouping and be assigned their own on-line teacher for the year. This may involve students from all schools in School Union 76 taking classes together. This opportunity will be determined by the number of students requesting the online option.

### **Option 3**

All learning takes place remotely if there is either a Stay-at-Home order or modified order to comply with possible 14 or 21-day quarantines. I expect that the State CDC and Dept of Ed will be looking at County and/or State-wide closures depending on local needs. Lastly, with the plans and guidelines that are being discussed at the State level, the spread of Covid-19 around the country and the very real concern that Flu Season will see an uptick in Covid-19, I believe two- or three-week closures are a very real possibility, at least by County in Maine.

## **EXPECTATIONS FOR RETURNING**

Based on our initial planning plus continued review of science and now the new Guidelines & Expectations from the ME Dept. of Ed which came out today, all of which are focused on reducing the spread of COVID-19, the following will be mandatory this fall:

- The wearing of face masks and/or face shields for students, staff and visitors, both in school and on our buses
- Students will eat lunch in their classroom and not in a large group in the cafeteria
- We will be using clear plastic, three-sided desk shields for students in all classrooms so that at times students will not have to wear their mask or face shield when working alone and not within 6 ft. of others
- Grades PreK – 8 students will:
  - o Stay in one classroom for a majority of their school day
  - o Have outside recess with their class only multiple times each day
  - o Have Art, Music, Library time in their classroom.

## **SURVEYS TO COMPLETE**

Over the next week there will be two surveys we need you to complete. Both will be short and only take a few minutes.

**Parent Survey 1** is online and is asking for your thoughts about Remote Learning. You can go to it by clicking on the following link: <https://forms.gle/i3KeisVSPxVqRztU6>

The **DEADLINE** to complete this survey is **Thursday, July 23<sup>rd</sup>, 8:00 pm.**

**Parent Survey 2** is focused on your thoughts around having your child(ren) return to school this fall and how we best communicate with you. It will be completed through a school staff member calling you and asking you to answer about 15 questions and should again only take a few minutes to complete. Phone calls will start this coming week and your school's principal will let you know who will be calling.

Thanks, in advance for your assistance with both surveys!

## **MOVING START OF SCHOOL YEAR TO SEPTEMBER 8TH**

This coming week I will be asking each School Board to change the start of our year to Tuesday, September 8<sup>th</sup>. **Why?** We are facing a new normal, whatever that looks like, and all of our staff have major adjustments to make, processes to learn and skills to improve, practice or learn so they are as prepared as possible to support our students and schools in the fall and beyond. **Why?** If we want our kids to return we need to be as prepared as possible to minimize health risks. I can't say we will eliminate all risks or the chances of spreading Covid-19, but we will do our best to minimize the possibilities and that will take a lot of professional development, planning and practice. **Why?** For the best protection possible for students, staff and their families and friends! I have heard from some who believe that all these protections are not needed because kids don't spread Covid-19 to each other. Although there is less chance of that happening, there is still *some* chance. When it comes to the protections needed to minimize risk, it isn't just our students I am worried about. We need to think of our committed staff, those who also visit our schools and those in our homes who may be vulnerable to contracting Covid-19 if a student becomes infected. **Why?** We need to get ready for a hopeful return to in-person learning for many of our students, but also need to plan to teach kids more effectively than we did this spring online if we are faced with totally online instruction or a mix of online and in-person instruction. We have much to do to prepare for September and you have my word that with a few more days to prepare we will be as prepared as any district in the State to serve our students and families as best as we can!

## **POLITICAL DIFFERENCES CAN'T INTERFERE WITH WHAT IS BEST FOR OUR STUDENTS AND STAFF!**

You and I want our kids back at school! You and I know that the best place for our kids under ordinary circumstances is in school! We also know that some of you will choose On-line Learning instead of In-person Learning because of the risks that you believe there are for your child(ren) and because you have that right. If we as a County and State can continue to keep the curve flat and not have spikes in positive cases then families in SU 76 will have choice. If we can't and our cases in Maine go up, likewise in Hancock County, then the decision will be made for you, your family and your children. There will only be on-line learning for everyone.

My PLEA to everyone is to model and follow ME CDC's Guidelines along with our Governor's orders and expectations for the wearing of masks, washing hands and Social-Distancing. Every expectation based on medical science, which we have believed and trusted before COVID-19. We routinely have followed recommendations about staying away from sick people, washing our hands, coughing and sneezing into our elbows in order to reduce the spread of colds and the flu. We need to continue to TRUST that this and similar advice continues to be correct during COVID-19. Sadly, following this advice has become a political football, putting many people in danger. As your Superintendent of Schools and as a proud citizen of Maine I believe that our State Guidelines are issued with the best intentions to look after the citizens of Maine, using the best medical resources available (far more than we have locally) and with no political motives!

If our communities don't do their best to follow the present and/or new guidelines or mandates, we are going to have a mess this fall. The increase in Covid-19 cases and deaths now happening in 40 States is a warning for what can happen here in Maine if we are careless and disregard the best information available on how to curb/stop Covid-19. If students come to school with an agenda to not follow our expectations or to give us continuous problems following our expectations ***then they will not be allowed in school and will be forced to use the online option available***, as I can't let them put others at increased risk.

School Union 76 will do our best to minimize risk in order to take care of our most precious resource, our students, along with our other precious resource, our staff, in the upcoming school year! If you do your best to follow our State's guidance now and until we beat this Pandemic then the phrase "As Maine goes, so goes the nation!" will return for the right reasons. If you don't then the mess we see across the nation will come to Maine. Remote Learning for all will return and many of our neediest students will suffer because the adults in Maine did not look out for their future!

Thanks for listening!