July 17, 2020

Dear MSAD #1 Students, Parents, and Staff;

I hope this letter finds you well. MSAD #1 administrators, teachers, and staff have spent the past few months preparing for our schools to reopen for in-person learning to begin the 2020-2021 school year. We continue to monitor the number of cases in our community, county, and state in making the decision of how to best open our schools in a way that keeps our students and staff safe. MSAD #1 is planning on returning to in-person learning when school resumes at Presque Isle High School on Wednesday, August 19 and plan to resume in-person learning for our Pre-K to Grade 8 students on Tuesday, September 8, as scheduled.

The rationale behind returning to in-person instruction is based on the fact that the five communities in MSAD #1 have yet to see a single case of the coronavirus. Currently, there are four active cases of the coronavirus in Aroostook County and the State of Maine continues to see a downward trend in coronavirus cases the past few weeks. We will continue to monitor the number of cases in our communities, county, and state and utilize this information to determine the safest option for educating our young people.

MSAD #1 plans to have three detailed plans in place for educating our students depending on the level of spread of the coronavirus and the best interests of safety for our students and staff. We plan to begin with our “GREEN” plan, which involves in-person learning as an option for all students.

GREEN - In-person learning for students that accounts for social distancing and increased cleaning measures in our buildings. Remote learning will be an option for families who decide to keep their children home at this time. This plan will remain in place provided that we continue to have low coronavirus case counts in our communities and county.

YELLOW - A combination of in-person learning and remote learning. Students would spend two days a week of in-person learning and three days a week of remote learning. In-Person class sizes would be reduced by 50%. This phase would be used as a temporary transition period between remote learning and in-person learning and not a long-term solution.

RED - At home learning with learning materials being available online for students. We are working on establishing clear expectations for students, families, and staff in order to maximize learning opportunities for students. We would put this plan into place if we saw a significant increase in cases in our communities and county.

What will a return to school look like for my child?

MSAD #1 created its reopening plan based on the *Interim Guidance for Administrators of US K-12 Schools and Child Care Programs* document created by the Center for Disease Control and Prevention as well as the *Framework for Return to Classroom Instruction* submitted by the Maine Department of Education. Our plan contains a number of priorities that may look different depending on the age and educational level of our students.
1. **Eliminating large gatherings of students.** We will not be utilizing our gymnasiums, cafeterias, and playgrounds for students to congregate before and after school. When a student arrives at school in the morning, he/she will go directly to his/her regular classroom. Students will eat breakfast and lunch in their assigned classroom. School assemblies will be postponed until we are given guidance to resume meeting in large groups.

2. **Keeping class cohorts together.** Our plan at the elementary level is to keep students within their regular classroom and with the same students each day. Individual classes will go to recess together, eat breakfast and lunch together, and be dismissed from their classrooms at the end of the day. We are not planning to require students to wear masks when they are in their classrooms. Students will also be scheduled for Art, Music, and Physical Education as they have traditionally and will be walking with their classmates to those learning spaces.

   a. It is more difficult to keep our middle and high school students together throughout the day due to a diverse curriculum and varied course offerings. At both schools we have reduced the number of periods in an effort to reduce transitions between classes. Principals at the middle and high school levels will be sharing details regarding the new bell schedule in the coming weeks.

3. **Increased emphasis on hand hygiene, cleaning, and disinfecting surfaces.** The school district has placed hand sanitizer dispensers in each classroom and we are currently establishing a beefed up cleaning schedule to ensure that all classrooms, bathrooms, and “high touch” areas are cleaned and disinfected on a regular basis.

4. **50% capacity on school buses.** Students will sit one student to a seat and immediate family members will be encouraged to sit together. We will be requiring students to wear masks when riding a school bus. Parents are encouraged to transport their children to school to help with our reduced capacity. MSAD #1 will transport any student who needs a ride to school. A survey will be sent to parents in the coming weeks inquiring about parents’ intentions regarding the transporting of their children.

5. **Masks and Social Distancing.** We will be requiring students to wear masks on the bus, when they enter and exit the school building, and when they transition between classes. Students will not be required to wear masks in their classrooms unless social distancing is not possible. Students are permitted to wear masks and/or shields in the classroom if they choose to do so. MSAD #1 will provide masks or shields for students who do not bring their own from home.

   a. All desks in all classrooms will face in the same direction and will be distanced as far apart as possible. We are unable to achieve six feet of distance between desks as it would only allow us to have 10-12 desks in each classroom.

**What Happens Next?**

MSAD #1 will be posting our detailed reopening plans for each school building prior to the end of July on our website (www.sad1.org). Parents and students will be contacted via email and our district notification service when our plans are posted. We plan to survey parents to ask whether or not they plan to have their son or daughter return to in-person learning when school resumes. We also plan to ask whether or not bus transportation is necessary for their child. This information will be imperative for us as we determine how best to educate our students when school resumes.

As we have continued to plan for a safe reopening of our schools, we have encouraged stakeholders to remain flexible and adaptable. We do not know what the future holds for our region as it relates to the coronavirus. We will adjust our plans as necessary to ensure the safety of our students and staff. I look forward to having students and staff safely return to our schools.

Best wishes and good health to all.

Sincerely,

[Signature]

Ben Greenlaw
Superintendent