

Returning to School in RSU 63: Some Frequently Asked Questions

1. Do students have to wear masks?

Face coverings (masks covering the nose and mouth) are required for all staff and all students in Kindergarten through Grade 8. Face coverings are recommended but not required for students in our Pre-Kindergarten/4-Year-Old program. They are only required for our Pre-Kindergarten students when the Pre-Kindergarten students are on a bus. All students must properly wear a face covering when on an RSU 63 bus or in an RSU 63 van.

2. What about using shields instead of mask?

Face shields may be an alternative for 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.

3. Do kids get a break from wearing masks?

Mask breaks will occur throughout the day and we anticipate that we will need to provide frequent mask breaks when school starts. Breaks will occur in settings where students can be at least six feet apart and preferably outside. If inside, mask breaks must occur where staff and students are at least 6 feet apart, the windows are open, and the fan is on, blowing air out of the classroom.

4. Will the school be taking everyone's temperature?

No, schools will not be taking everyone's temperature. If a student looks unwell or says they do not feel good, their temperature will be taken. Universal temperature checks of students upon entry to school premises will not be conducted due to the high likelihood of potential false positive results, false negative results, and difficulty maintaining physical distancing when entering school vehicles or school buildings. Current CDC and DOE guidance requires symptom screening to occur at home before students or staff come to school.

Parents/guardians **MUST** screen their children for illness before sending them to school and should not send their children to school if they are ill. Staff **MUST** also screen their health before coming to work.

The following questions are to be used for screening:

- a. Within the past 24 hours have you had a fever (100.4 and above) or used any fever reducing medicine?
- b. Do you feel sick with a cough, shortness of breath, or difficulty breathing?
- c. Have you been in close contact with a person diagnosed or suspected of having COVID-19?
- d. Have you traveled outside of Maine in the past 14 days?

If the answer to any of these questions is "Yes," stay home! Contact your health care provider and contact the school secretary and let her know why your child will not be coming to school.

5. What happens if a student is at school and has a fever?

Each school has a separate medical isolation/resting room for students and/or staff who exhibit COVID-19 symptoms and are waiting to be picked up. Parents/guardians will be notified and will need to come pick up their child right away.

RSU 63 students and staff must have written permission from their health care provider in order to return to school/work after displaying symptoms of COVID-19.

6. What will happen if a student or staff member has COVID-19?

The CDC will be contacted by our school nurse (or the CDC will inform our school nurse). The school building(s) will be closed for deep cleaning and disinfecting. "Red" All Remote Instruction will begin. The CDC will conduct contact tracing. Quarantining and the returning of students and staff to the school buildings will occur under the guidance of the CDC. Our SchoolMessenger phone call and email system will be used to notify parents when the level of instruction must be changed (i.e. from Green to Red). Information will also be posted on our website and Facebook page.

7. Do students have to stay apart from one another?

Physical distancing is another important practice that helps reduce transmission of the virus. We aim for six feet of distance between individuals where feasible. At the same time, a minimum physical distance of three feet between students is adequate when combined with the other measures outlined in this document, including screening, the use of masks/face coverings, hand hygiene, and stable cohorts/groups of students.

We aim for a physical distance of six feet when feasible. Three feet is the minimum distance allowed between students. When eating or taking a mask break, students must be at least six feet apart.

8. Will my child need to stay in one room all day long?

RSU 63 will be implementing the Maine Department of Education and CDC guidance of keeping students and staff in stable cohort groups. These groups will be by pod when "Yellow" (smallest group of about 6 – 12 students) and homerooms (about 12-18 students) when "Green." Consistent staff members will be with the pods/homeroom groups. There will be times in the day for pods and homerooms to go outdoors and move to locations other than their homeroom classroom.

9. Will my child be with different students or teachers during the school day?

There will be some occasions when students from the same grade level are with other students from that grade level for specialized instruction (e.g. Geometry or Occupational Therapy). There will also be some occasions when another teacher who is assigned to your child's grade may enter the homeroom classroom to provide instruction (e.g. Grade 7 Social Studies or Grade 8 Math).

10. Will Remote days be the same as last year?

No, remote days will be different this year. We learned a lot since last spring and have made many changes to what remote instruction will be like. There will be live video conferences every day. Students are expected to attend "Morning Meeting" every day, through Google Meet when remote and in person during at-school days. New learning will take place and

students will be graded similarly to how they were graded during the first and second trimesters last year.

11. I am not comfortable sending my child to school. Will there be a Remote Option?

Yes, there will be a Remote Option for families. Please keep in mind the Remote Option when At-School instruction is being offered (Yellow and Green) will not be the same as RED (All Remote Instruction). Parents will need to pick up instructional materials and resources from the schools. Students will need to attend Morning Meetings via Google Meet. RSU 63 teachers will provide some direct instruction, assignments, resources, and “office hours” support via video conferencing. If needed, on-line support will be available to students who “get stuck” and need to connect to a teacher or tutor.

12. What about transportation to and from school?

Bus capacity will be extremely limited. Please consider transporting your child(ren) to school.

Our traffic flow patterns, drop off, pick up, and building entry points will be different from what we have used in the past. **PLEASE USE CAUTION.** Each grade level will enter and exit our buildings from an assigned set of doors. Students will not be gathering in the cafeteria or on the playground in the morning.

Parents will need to wait in their vehicle in the parking lot for their child(ren) to be brought into and out of the building.

Students can be dropped off at the Eddington and Holden Schools from 8:00am until 8:40am. Parents can pick up students from the Eddington and Holden Schools from 2:30pm until 3:00pm.

Students can be dropped off at the Holbrook School from 8:10am until 8:40am. Parents can pick up students from the Holbrook School from 3:00pm until 3:30pm.

13. Will there be buses?

Yes, we will use our buses and vans to help get students to school. Students are required to use hand sanitizer when getting on the bus, keep their facemask on, and use hand sanitizer when exiting the bus. Students must remain in the seat assigned to them by the driver. Students from the same family may be assigned to the same seat; otherwise, there will only be one child per seat.

14. What will the bus schedule be?

Our bus runs and times will be as similar as possible to last year. However, much of the exact timing will depend on how many families transport their children to school and how many need to ride the bus. Our first priority is to safely get the students to and from school. Routes will take longer, disinfecting will occur after students exit the buses (before a new group of students get on), windows will be cracked open, and students will be reminded to stay three feet apart.

14. How come we are starting “Yellow” when the county is “Green?”

Our students and staff need time to learn and implement the new requirements and procedures. We need the additional desks we ordered to accommodate individual seating to arrive. We have the PPE (Personal Protective Equipment such as mask, glove, gowns, and hand sanitizer) we need to get through the first weeks of school at half capacity. However, at this

time we are still waiting for deliveries of PPE from the state and from other companies. We may also need more staff in order to keep students in stable homeroom groups and at least three feet apart from other students, six feet apart from adults, and six feet apart when taking a mask break or eating.

15. How come we can't just have school 5 days per week when we are "Green?"

While we all want things to go back to normal, they are not normal. Stable cohort groups and physical distancing requirements means all our teachers and ed techs need to be with our student homeroom groups for the entire school day. We have hired more staff (ed techs, substitutes, and custodians) to help meet all the requirements. However, we also need to provide our teachers with planning time so they can prepare remote lesson materials, provide students feedback, prepare at-school lessons, connect with parents, and work together with other teachers and administrators to refine and improve our systems.

16. How will I know what my child is supposed to do on remote days?

Assignments for Remote days will be emailed to parents and students every Sunday evening. **Parents - PLEASE be sure we have a current email address for you. If your email address has changed, please notify the school secretary.** All students will have an @rsu63.org email address. Attendance will be taken during Morning Meetings for students At-School **and** for students who are participating Remotely.

17. How can I help my child get ready to return to school?

Parents are asked to provide basic school supplies for use at home. PLEASE let us know if you need basic school supplies for your home.

PLEASE **send** your child to school with a water bottle and a clean face mask. Due to limited space and potential contamination, PLEASE **do not** send in school supplies with your child.

RSU 63 will provide students with individual storage space and individual tool kits with the school supplies and materials needed at school. RSU 63 will also provide specialized supplies and materials for use at home (for example a flute-a-phone or art supplies).

We encourage families to begin practicing how to properly wear face masks for extended periods of time and discussing the importance of personal hygiene including hand washing and physical distancing. We also encourage our younger learners to practice personal care skills such as tying their shoes and opening their own lunch box/pre-packaged lunch items.

Build temperature checks and having a clean mask before leaving home into your morning routines.

Please remember kids notice and follow our adult cues. Share information with children about how they can help reduce the spread of COVID-19. Answer their questions matter-of-factly. Remind them about times they were scared and what helped them in the past (taking a few deep breaths, giving it a try, knowing who to turn to for help...)

Thank you for working together to help keep our schools and children safe!