



School Union 69
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Superintendent's Report for: August, 2021

Hope School Committee

District Goals:

Usually, I begin my Superintendent's report with a review of the School Committee's Goals and the District's progress in meeting those goals. At this time, the Board has not yet developed Goals for the 21-22 school year.

Ongoing Superintendent Professional Development:

Summer Law classes in July: Maine School Law and Maine Special Education Law

Cultural Competency Institute: The five person team from SU #69, including Danielle Fagonde and Superintendent Clark will begin the monthly professional development in September.

Coronavirus:

Thinking back to the last few days of school, when the students and staff could enjoy time together outdoors without masks, I remember how hopeful we were that we had figured out a way to beat back the threat of the Coronavirus and that we were going to get back to some type of normalcy. Unfortunately, the reality today has set us back on our heels. As you know from the mitigation plan we have proposed, we once again need to be very careful when we meet in person not to expose ourselves and others to the Coronavirus or any of its more contagious variants. Cases around us are rising at an alarming rate and once again, the CDC is recommending masking, distancing, handwashing and other mitigation measures if we are to be inside together to stop the spread of the virus. This is disappointing to all of us, it is difficult to come to terms with the capricious nature of this virus and the loss of all the activities we were hoping to restart without worrying as much about the virus.

To begin though, I would like to focus on some positives from the year that just passed:

- With just one brief closure, we held more in-person classes than many districts around us, and certainly more than many states outside New England.
- We did not have any confirmed cases of spread in our building.
- Academically, our students did very well for the most part, we certainly did not see the decline we were anticipating at the beginning of the school year.
- We were able to prove the value of masking, social distancing and other mitigation measures and Maine was considered a leader in the nation when it came to holding school in-person.

The process to design this year's plan for opening school and the mitigation measures was exhaustive. The same team that put so much time and effort into making sure we were as safe as possible last year met again this summer. This team, using the lessons we learned from last

year as well as the latest information from experts from US CDC and Maine CDC and DOE, developed a plan for the start of school designed to keep everyone as safe as possible. One of the most important factors in making this plan is the fact that approximately 70% of the people in our school are not, and cannot be, vaccinated against the Coronavirus and most of those people are small children. These measures are a small price to pay to ensure, as best we can, that we can hold in person classes for as many students as possible, for as long as possible.

As I hear from Superintendents in the Midcoast region, I can share that over 95% of the districts that have reported their plans to me are using the very same mitigation measures we are, including masking, distancing as much as possible and daily symptom checks. Our plan adheres to the strong recommendations of the US CDC, Maine CDC and Maine DOE and keeps us in compliance with the requirements of the American Recovery Act grants.

Additionally, mitigation measures may help many families who chose not to send their children to school last year return to the school in person. Keep in mind that we, like most of the districts around us, will not be starting the school offering a remote learning option as discussed at our Board meetings last spring. There is a fiscal risk in losing students to private schools, homeschooling or other situations if we do not take the steps necessary to make schools as safe as possible. We get funding for every child that attends our school, so if those people that chose the remote option last year do not return their students to school, we could lose some significant funding.

So, while it was difficult to think about taking these measures again, when we had such high hopes at the end of last year, the decision making process in itself was not difficult. The compelling reasons outlined above and the fact that the overwhelming majority of the Health and Safety Team agreed to reinstate these safety measures makes it easy for me to strongly recommend that the Board approve the plan as presented by the Health and Safety Team.