

November 30, 2020

Dear RSU 16 Community,

We are writing today to inform you that last week we received new guidance from the Maine Department of Education (DOE) on mask wearing in our schools. For the full notice [click here](#) or <https://mailchi.mp/maine/cu5lemq6y0-1322296?e=c7914ff853>

In addition to new guidance, the DOE also included this encouraging information regarding our current practices.

“As the case numbers and reach of COVID-19 continues to expand in our communities, our schools have been diligent about ensuring that the six requirements for in-person instruction are being implemented. This commitment is evident in the data analysis conducted by Maine CDC. Over the last 30 days, the new case rate in Maine schools, including both students and staff, was 8.8 cases per 10,000, compared to 19.9 cases per 10,000 in Maine overall. This may indicate that school settings are safer than other community settings, and this is likely due to your careful adherence to the health and safety requirements and guidelines.”

As a result of the newest guidance on increasing structure around mask breaks, there are some changes that will need to be made to our current practices. These changes are outlined below.

Elementary Level:

- We will continue to offer mask breaks while students are 6 feet apart, but mask breaks will now be limited to 5 minutes per break with no more than 3 mask breaks happening throughout the day. (This is outside of the time students remove their masks to eat breakfast, lunch, snack, or drink water.)
- Students will now be required to wear masks during recess and physical education.
- During times when students are eating, staff will be encouraged to provide activities that limit talking such as a read aloud or other structured activities while students are seated.

Middle School/High School Level:

- There are no anticipated changes at these levels. Established mask practices are already aligned with the new guidance.

As always, we encourage students to come to school with a spare clean mask. Cloth face coverings should have multiple layers (2 or 3 ply) of cloth and should be washed daily. We are now asking that these spare masks come to school in a clean plastic baggie. This will allow students to place soiled masks into the baggie when switching out a soiled mask for a clean one. Masks with exhalation valves or vents are not permitted.

Thank you for your understanding and patience as we continue to adjust our practices in response to safety guidelines provided to our district by the state.

Sincerely,

Kenneth J. Healey