

July 9, 2021

Dear Staff, Families, and Community Members,

Reporting COVID-19 cases over the summer

All elementary students participating in summer school should report cases to Poland Community School, regardless of your hometown school. The number is 998-4915 and the nurse is Louise Robinson. Whittier Middle School and Poland Regional High school students should report to WMS/PRHS at 998-5400. The nurses are Lisa Storer and Pam Tracy. For student athletes that are enrolled in summer athletics, please report positive COVID-19 cases to Don King, athletic director, 998-5400.

Fall 2021 (5 days a week)

There are likely to be changes to the CDC/Maine Department of Education Framework and rules over the course of the summer. At this time...

- We are planning for all schools across grades PreK-12 to open with 5 days a week of instruction (4 days as usual for our PreK program) for all students following our normal school hours per the [approved calendar](#).
- We will continue to follow all current and future Maine Department of Education and Maine CDC guidance.
- The State of Maine intends to modify the Framework to lift all physical distancing requirements for PreK-12 schools and adult education programs, effective for the start of the 2021 school year. This increases our transportation and room capacities and eliminates students being 6-feet apart during meals.
- Schools will be strongly encouraged to participate in the pooled testing program to protect those students for whom a COVID-19 vaccine has not yet been authorized. RSU 16 will participate in pooled testing in the fall. More details about pooled testing, including how parents give consent, in future updates.
- We will continue our social-emotional, academic and instructional focus for accelerated student learning, with hiring 9.5 additional staff using ESSER 3 funds. Also, given we are unable to predict the future, we want to make sure we continue to be prepared to meet whatever changing conditions may occur until we are sure the pandemic is finally over.
- Maine's State of Civil Emergency ended on June 30, 2021. The State's last remaining face covering requirement, which only applied to indoor PreK-12 schools and childcare settings, also ended on June 30. Maine Center Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) will continue to strongly recommend, but not require, that unvaccinated people – including those under 12 years of age who are not yet eligible for a COVID vaccine – wear face coverings indoors. Effective July 1, in RSU 16 face masks are no longer mandated, so masks do not need to be worn inside or outside of school property. The care, safety and wellbeing of children has always been and will always be a parental responsibility, accordingly Parents/Families/Caregivers may choose when and where their child(ren) wears a face mask on school property. Likewise, RSU 16 staff may choose when and where they wear a face mask. To err on the side of caution, RSU 16 strongly recommends that those unvaccinated wear a face mask.
- Vaccinated staff or students who are deemed a close contact to a positive case and who are asymptomatic (showing no symptoms) are not required to quarantine. Please make sure your vaccination record is on file with the school nurse.
- We anticipate that our youngest students, ages 4-11, will not have access to approved COVID-19 vaccine(s) until September.

Save the Dates

Our summer Family, Community, Staff Updates will be published on July 23, August 6, August 20

In the **July 23** update, we will share the full RSU 16 plan for fall instruction

July 27 will be a Listening Session with RSU 16 Staff at **6-7PM via Zoom Webinar**

July 28 will be a Listening Session with Community and Families at **6-7PM via Zoom Webinar**

Lunch and Recess Supervision

If you can consistently give 1-2 hours of volunteer time each week next school year, our elementary schools are looking for volunteers to help with lunch and recess supervision. You would be partnered with a school staff. If you are interested in learning more, contact the building principal. ESS - Jessica Madsen, jmadsen@rsu16.org, MCS - Kaitlynn Brown, kbrown@rsu16.org, PCS - Lisa Burns, lburns@rsu16.org

Transportation

Daycare/Alternate Transportation Request Forms are available from school offices and from our transportation director, Fred Barlow (fbarlow@rsu16.org). This form must be received on or before August 6, 2021, for all transportation that will begin on the first day of classes. All forms from previous school years have expired.

Pooled Testing

In RSU 16, we seek to maintain a safe environment for employees, students, families, and the community. To support those goals, we have partnered with [Concentric by Ginkgo](#) to provide an optional and free pooled testing program. Currently, we are piloting pooled testing with our summer school programs.

What is pooled testing?

Pooling can test 25 people using one test. All students in a class, pod, or cohort swab their own noses and place their swabs in a single tube (that's the pooling step). The samples in that tube are then run as a single sample, using one test. [See it in action here.](#)

Why pooled testing? Why should my student participate?

You know the old saying: "knowledge is power." Tools like pooled testing empower us to make great decisions. Without knowing the specific prevalence of COVID-19 in our school, it's tough for us to make informed decisions about safeguarding our school community, returning to school, or continuing in-person learning. Only students with completed consent forms are able to participate in testing. If you do not want your family to participate, your student will not be included in the testing program. Though, we hope you do! Testing empowers us to make these informed decisions about in-person learning and allows students, teachers, and staff to come to school with peace of mind.

Free and Reduced Lunch Forms and Important Information From The Food Service Director

In the coming school year 2021-2022 school meals will be provided to your children at no charge. However, we still need families to complete the attached school meal application form even though meals are free for the next year. Some parents are concerned about listing income amounts and social security numbers on the application. Any personal information you provide will not be shared. Along with the paper application we now have an online application, please access it at www.SchoolLunchApp.com

- ❖ Free and reduced price meal applications are **confidential**. Your information will only be used to determine your child's eligibility for the school meal programs. **We cannot share your information without your written permission.**

There are a few important reasons to fill out this form:

- ❖ If your child qualifies for free or reduced price lunches you may qualify for Pandemic-EBT benefits.
- ❖ The number of applications that are returned and approved can affect how much school funding our schools receive.
- ❖ Title I funding uses the number of free and reduced for Title funding eligibility. Minot Consolidated School (MCS) is not eligible to receive Title funding next school year because eligibility criteria was not met. RSU 16 has dedicated ESSER 3 funding to cover this MCS position for next year so students will not have an interruption in service. On the horizon, Poland Community School will likely lose Title I funding for the 2022-2023 school year if eligibility is not met.
- ❖ Another benefit is after school and summer meal programs. Local summer programs can benefit by having meals provided to them at no cost to the parents

Please take a few minutes to fill out this form so that your child and child's school may qualify for these important benefits. If you have any questions please contact Ellen Dore, RSU 16 Food Service Director, edore@rsu16.org, 207-998-5400 ext 107.

Sincerely,

Ken Healey and Amy Hediger