



August 23rd, 2021

Greetings Monadnock Community!

Reopening Update

As you likely recall, the [reopening plan that was approved by the Board in June](#) indicated that we would follow NH DHHS guidelines for masks, social distancing, quarantine, and illness response. On August 11th, [NH DHHS issued updated guidance for schools](#) which included a decision matrix for the wearing of masks. Last Tuesday, the School Board reviewed our plans for reopening this school year and specifically addressed the wearing of masks. While we will continue to follow NH DHHS guidelines, the Board passed the following motion regarding the decision matrix developed by NH DHHS:

To [adjust the reopening plan matrix](#) for **universal indoor mask wearing** while the county is in the **moderate transmission level or above**.

		Level of Community Transmission		
		Minimal	Moderate	Substantial
Cases within Facility	Sporadic cases without evidence of facility transmission	Optional	Universal	Universal
	Single cluster	Targeted	Universal	Universal
	Multiple clusters or a larger outbreak	Universal	Universal	Universal

* Face masks still recommended for people who want maximal protection for themselves or others (e.g., a household member who is unvaccinated or medically vulnerable)

† Exceptions can be made for classrooms/schools that have achieved a high vaccination rate (e.g., high-school), or where other prevention measures can be strictly implemented (e.g., 6 feet of physical distancing)

All drivers and riders on school busses or vans are required to wear masks that cover their mouth and nose while on board.

We are continuing to track our County level data on our own [COVID-19 Trend Tracker](#). Data for that tracker is pulled from the [NH DHHS COVID-19 website](#). Currently, the level of transmission for Cheshire county is **substantial**, and it is likely going to stay elevated for some time. The matrix does allow for exceptions for classrooms or buildings that have achieved a high vaccination rate (80% or greater) or where other preventive measures can be strictly implemented (like social distancing). **The overall combined vaccination rate (students and employees) is below the 80% threshold in all of our schools.**

Until the level of transmission in Cheshire county returns to minimal OR vaccination rates at school buildings reach 80% (whichever comes first):

*Masks are required indoors for all employees, visitors, and students when **school is in session** and/or **groups of students are present** in the building.*

Masks are required on all school busses and school transportation by [federal order](#).

The wearing of masks has become a polarized issue. We've all seen news stories that detail heated exchanges between those of differing opinions on the subject of masks, some of which have led to violent incidents. I'm proud of our community because that hasn't happened here, and we all have a role in ensuring that it doesn't in the future.

Many folks have indicated that they intend to wear masks regardless of whether it is required or optional - they have every right to do so, and I ask that you respect those decisions. In those instances where the wearing of masks is optional, please be respectful of others and their comfort level within our buildings. If you are visiting someone else's 'space' and they ask you to wear a mask, please do so. Be prepared and keep a mask with you, just in case. Thank you for your continued patience and support as we work through this together.

School Meals: Free and Reduced Meals

The USDA (United States Department of Agriculture) released nationwide waivers extending flexibilities for the Seamless Summer Option (SSO) through June 30, 2022. SSO is a federally funded program that provides free Breakfast & Lunch meals to all students regardless of their family income level. This is a further extension of the program that provided meals over the last school year.

There is no paperwork for families to complete to receive these free meals. **However, if a student would normally qualify for free or reduced lunch, it is vitally important that parents complete online or paper forms as soon as possible.**

Failure to complete the forms negatively impacts school funding.

Please visit our [Nutrition Services website](#) and complete an application for free and reduced meals if you think you may be eligible. If you have any questions please contact the Nutrition Services office at (603)903-6818 or twalsh@mrsd.org

Project Beyond the Bell

We are excited that our afterschool program will be available for free this school year at Cutler, Emerson, Mt. Caesar, and Troy! Please visit the [Project Beyond the Bell website](#) for information and registration forms.

Health Reminders

To ensure the health and safety of all, **please do not send your child to school if they are ill or have symptoms of COVID-19.** Anyone who has symptoms of COVID-19 should get tested before returning to school. **Home tests are acceptable as proof of infection - however, a negative home test needs to be followed up with a lab test to be accepted.** Please notify your child's school nurse if:

- Your child tests positive for COVID19
- Your child is a close contact of a household member who has tested positive for COVID19

Your child's school nurse will best be able to assist you with appropriate follow-up and next steps in the event of illness to ensure a timely and safe return to school.

We are so excited to welcome our students back! If you have any questions regarding the return to school this year, please reach out to your child's principal or to me directly at lwitte@mrsd.org.

Best,



Lisa A. Witte
Superintendent of Schools