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**August 17, 2021**

### **SAU 7 School Re-Opening 2021-22 Guide**

As we prepare to officially begin the 2021-22 school year, we look forward to a year of joy, health and safety, communication, deep learning, and collaboration. We have many things to celebrate!

In Colebrook recently, I noticed the very first leaves graced with slight hues of red and orange, evidence that fall is on its way! Indeed, change is in the air. We will see changes in many things this year, including lessening of COVID -19 restrictions as we continue five-day full time in person instruction.

First we have initiated a comprehensive curriculum development project to support our student needs and enhance teaching and learning. Our schools will implement competency-based learning and standards which ensure a pathway to success for all learners. Following a difficult year, we want every student engaged and progressing academically. We have provided summer school sessions and plan to offer after school programs. We have also invested in evidence-based strategies, resources, and professional development for the 2021-2022 school year to address the lost instructional time.

Second, we are prioritizing social, emotional, and mental health to create a strong foundation for learning. To support this, we will assess the social emotional needs of students, invest in effective Social Emotional Learning activities and strategies, and use a multi-tiered approach to address behaviors that are restorative and equitable.

Third, as we return to school this fall, health and safety continue to be our top priority. Given the current science regarding COVID-19 and any variant, we are making it a priority to return to in person learning full-time on August 30, 2021. Following more than a year of the pandemic, we will re-engage students, staff, parents, and families as they return to school and work. We must address gaps that occurred as a result of the pandemic and strengthen our school system. We have identified nine key strategy areas for reopening recommendations that prioritize health & safety, social & emotional health, and increasing academic achievement.

We acknowledge that the community would like to know exactly what to expect for the return to school in the Fall. We will continue to respond to the current conditions. The level of community vaccination and the level of local COVID-19 transmission will determine our school response. To this end we will continue to regularly meet with our Regional COVID-19 Response Team. Here is an summary of our health and safety guidelines as approved by the SAU # 7 School Board on August 12, 2021. The full plan will be published on the district

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website this week. *\*Please note - The SAU 7 COVID - 19 guidelines are subject to change for the following reasons: a) local illness transmission levels increase, or b) if NH DPHS guidance changes, or c) state executive order instituted or d) federal requirements change.*

We have been advised by medical advisors to make mitigation decisions based on the vaccination status of our community as well as on the level of community transmission. We recognize that those are variables that will likely change over the course of the school year and thus our response to COVID-19 mitigation will escalate in times of substantial community transmission and de-escalate in times of low community transmission. Our reopening plan is an attempt to minimize risk, not eliminate it.

The CDC outlines the following 9 key prevention strategies that we address in our SAU 7 opening plan.

1. Promoting vaccination
  - *To provide the best level of protection possible to our students, fellow staff members, and potential visitors, we continue to encourage all eligible persons to become vaccinated against COVID-19 as recommended by CDC and NH DPHS.*
  - *We will continue to provide information and notification of vaccine locations to staff members and parents.*
2. Consistent and correct mask use
  - *Face masks are not required when staff and students are outside.*
  - *At the start of the school year, with low levels of community transmission, indoor mask use will be optional but recommended for all students and staff regardless of their vaccination status. Students and staff who are concerned for their health, or who are immunocompromised, can still choose to wear face masks for individual protection.*
  - *If there are substantial levels of transmission, the SAU #7 COVID Response Team will meet to assess local factors and discuss the need for increased mitigation including the implementation of a mask requirement.*
  - *Masks are required on school buses.*
3. Physical distancing
  - *Students will be distanced to the best extent possible with a goal of at least 3 feet of physical space.*
  - *Face masks should be worn when students and staff are unable to maintain required distancing.*
4. Screening testing to promptly identify cases, clusters, and outbreaks
  - *NH DPHS has suggested that implementing a screening testing program is not necessary to conduct full in person learning.*
  - *We will not implement a screening testing program, but will require testing for symptomatic individuals.*
5. Ventilation
  - *Rooms will be well ventilated with our serviced ventilation (HVAC) systems on an extended time frame each day and when appropriate, we will open windows.*
  - *Engineering assessment and upgrade of the HVAC system in each school is a strategy in our ARP ESSER Grant applications and will be accomplished this year.*
6. Handwashing and respiratory etiquette
  - *Hand hygiene will remain a priority.*
  - *Students and staff will be encouraged to cover coughs and sneezes.*

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7. Staying home when sick and getting tested
  - *We will continue to have a low threshold for symptomatic students and staff attending school and ask that parents keep their children home if they are unwell.*
  - *Students and staff with symptoms will be excluded from school and asked to test prior to their return to the building. If they refuse testing, we will consider them positive and ask that they isolate at home for 10 days.*
8. Contact tracing, in combination with isolation and quarantine
  - *Positive cases that occur at school (students or staff) will be reported to DPHS*
  - *We will continue to follow NH DPHS guidance for quarantine and isolation.*
  - *Quarantine of entire classrooms or cohorts will no longer take place.*
9. Cleaning and disinfection
  - *Cleaning and disinfection of frequently touched surfaces will take place daily.*
  - *If a person with COVID19 was in a school building, we will clean and disinfect the areas that the person came into contact with.*

We care deeply about all members of our school community and are committed to ensuring their wellbeing. We have built strong relationships, and have an outstanding staff and school community. We will work together through whatever comes our way.... And, we will thrive, of this I am sure.

**For More Information Please Contact Dr. Debra Taylor, Superintendent ([dtaylor@sau7.org](mailto:dtaylor@sau7.org))**

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