

August 7, 2021

Dear Lamoille North Families and Staff,

My hope is that you have taken time to enjoy summer in Vermont and have been able to spend time doing things that bring you joy. I am reminded, every time I return to Vermont from time away, of the beauty of our state and the changing patterns of the days as fall approaches. I'm choosing to start my letter to you so you can have a sense of where the leaders and other state officials are in regards to the start of school. We should remind ourselves that we can create clarity in uncertainty and we can do hard things and do them well. But mostly, we should reflect on how much we have to look forward to as we welcome our students back into our buildings for full in-person instruction, five days per week.

MASKS

The Vermont Agency of Education (VTAOE) released this [advisory document](#) two days ago. Superintendents had the opportunity to question the Secretary of Education yesterday. I will be upfront in that we have many more questions than answers regarding what safety measures local school leaders can and cannot mandate. I thought it was important to begin a conversation with you about fall expectations now, knowing that guidance from our state officials could change at a moment's notice given the COVID-19 context. We will be certain to communicate any of those changes as soon as they are made.

It will be necessary for all students and staff to wear a mask while indoors until further notice. Masks may be removed when students and staff are outside the school building. Masks are required on all school busses.

The VTAOE and Vermont Department of Health (VTDOH) have recommended that masks be required until 80% of the vaccine eligible student population in a school has been vaccinated. Because we currently do not know how we are expected to calculate the 80% mark of vaccinated students, decisions regarding how long we must wear masks will be made at a later date.

Aside from wearing masks, there are no other mitigation measures set forth by the VTAOE or the VTDOH at this time. There are no social distancing requirements or restrictions on the number of people who can be together in a space.

STAY HOME WHEN SICK

As with last year, please keep your child home from school when any cold-like symptoms arise. Should symptoms begin at school, your child will be sent home immediately. In addition, your child must stay home from school if they have a fever 100.4°F or higher or if they are asked to quarantine due to close contact with a positive COVID-19 case.

CONTACT TRACING & POSITIVE CASES IN SCHOOLS

While schools will still be conducting contact tracing, we are awaiting guidance regarding how we are to respond should we have a positive case in our school.

And finally, if there is one thing that was crystal clear to me last school year, it's that the Lamoille North communities care deeply about each other. If you listen to the national news, this is what sets us apart from the rest of the nation--our understanding of collective responsibility for our neighbors. The messaging regarding everything our students/children have missed in the past year and a half is also quite loud and while I agree there are many experiences that our students lost, there are also things that they gained because of this pandemic. Our students have a much greater ability to empathize with others. They understand, better than generations before them perhaps, that their actions matter to the collective group around them. We should be proud of the strong sense of community we have built.

As always, please reach out to me if you would like to talk through these mandates. We are all looking forward to seeing all of our students filling our hallways in just a few short weeks!

My best to you,

Catherine Gallagher, M.Ed.
Superintendent of Schools
Lamoille North Supervisory Union