



August 15, 2021

Dear Lamoille North Families,

We are increasingly excited to see all of our students as we get closer to the start of the school year! I hope each of you enjoyed summer and are now looking forward to the beginning of school. The end of last school year brought with it a sense of relief and optimism. Vaccine rates were high and COVID-19 case counts were very low. Guidance for summer programs was minimal and we enjoyed seamless operations and rich outdoor experiences. Although the conditions regarding the COVID-19 context are much better than they were last year at this time, we are seeing cases in the state of the Delta variant of COVID-19. The context in which we begin this school year is going to be a little more challenging than we had anticipated back in June. Our goal is to have every student in our buildings, five days per week for in-person instruction; therefore, it is vital that we take as many safety measures as possible in our buildings so that we can ensure smooth operations and exemplary academic and social-emotional experiences for all.

Last week, the Secretary of Education and the Commissioner of Health issued an advisory memo laying out the recommended COVID-19 Prevention Measures for the start of the school year. Although it is disappointing to us all that we need to reinstitute any mitigation efforts, we are fortunate to have fewer restrictions, or required practices, than were instituted last year. Our school board will be discussing this memo at its meeting on Monday, August 16, 2021, at 5:00 pm at GMTCC/CEC.

On a similar note, we are fortunate to host our first public forum on Monday, August 23, 2021, at 6:00 pm at GMTCC/CEC, **where our guest speaker will be Dr. William Raszka, chief pediatric epidemiologist at UVM and a lead contributor to the state COVID-19 Task Force.** This will be both an in-person and virtual platform to accommodate as many people as possible. People in attendance at the CEC are required to wear masks. I encourage you to attend with any questions or concerns you may have.

We recognize for some there may be questions regarding the authority to require masks. Districts have the authority and the responsibility to exercise a “duty of care.” Please read this [memo](#) that we recently received and, in particular, the guidance from the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) and the American Academy of Pediatrics. It is reasonable and necessary to support the health of students and staff. Our goal is to put into place measures that diminish the spread of the virus that will also diminish any disruption to full, five days per week, in-person learning. We anticipate sending to you our reopening plan this week, with all established operational procedures and protocols.

Please anticipate that we will need to provide further guidance, clarifications and updates as they are published. In particular, we are awaiting guidance around how contact tracing will work this year, and how lunch periods and music classes should be implemented. In addition, we have received guidance regarding remote learning. **The only remote learning we will be authorized to implement at this time is any kind of virtual learning that we had in place pre-COVID-19 pandemic. What this means is that the remote learning we offered last year is not an option for students at this juncture.** We must all recognize that, once again, the situation is somewhat fluid and subject to change. We will continue to monitor the situation and to adjust as we receive updated guidance, or as our specific context evolves.

On another note, there have been questions around bussing and schedules. As is always the case, Lamoille Valley Transportation and our other bus coordinators will post schedules the week of August 23, 2021, and in the August 26, 2021, edition of the News & Citizen. In order to meet the needs of as many students as possible, our bus coordinators work closely with our schools to have as up-to-date enrollment information as possible as close to the start of school as possible. Please feel free to contact Deb Clark, LNSU Business Manager, at 851-1161, if you have questions about bussing. Lastly, per CDC requirements, **all bus riders and drivers, regardless of vaccination status, must wear masks while on busses.**

Again, I will send you updates as they arise and any other guidelines that may be forthcoming. But mostly, what I want you to take from this message is that I am optimistic that we will navigate anything that comes our way, and navigate it well. Many mitigation measures that were imposed last year are not in play at this time and we really do have so much to be excited and joyful about.

Please do not hesitate to reach out to me directly if you have questions. Despite our recent need to increase precautions, we are looking forward to the start of the school year!

My best to you,

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