

Montpelier Roxbury Public Schools

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Our schools are caring, creative, and equitable communities that empower all children to build on their talents and passions to grow into engaged citizens and life-long learners.

July 16, 2020

Dear MRPS Families & Community,

I hope this Thursday update finds you and yours happy and healthy. This time period is an absolute marathon for all of us. I'm hearing that finding a hidden swimming hole in the depth of a Vermont woods is helpful for stress levels and I am determined to try that advice out this weekend. The glimpses I've gotten of some of our MRPS kids either on the fields around MHS or in the background of a video chat with a parent does this educator good.

The administrative team and staff/faculty leaders continue our intensive planning regarding school this fall. I recognize that "fall" is not that far away and we are doing everything we can right now to make decisions and communicate them out. You can count on a Thursday update from me each week and a follow up from building principals each Monday going forward. This entire scenario is one big house of cards. Decisions made could evolve as we know more from our state officials. We will communicate what we know in this moment. This particular update will be a long one.

RULES

If you have not read the [opening guidelines](#) from the state, I encourage you to do so. A cliff's notes version of the absolute "rules" in the guidance are as follows:

- Schools will open in-person in Step 2; bussing will be considered in Step 3;
- Spots where students traditionally congregate (eg. cafeteria, gym) cannot be used for their intended purposes;
- All students and adults must wear a mask (we're awaiting on word regarding preK);
- We must maintain a distance of 6 feet apart as much as possible;
- No outside visitors are allowed in our buildings and the buildings are not open for community usage after school hours;
- All students and adults must be health checked at the first point of contact--before riding the bus and before entering the school building. This includes a temperature check and

answering COVID-related questions. Students who have been health checked cannot mingle with those who have not yet been health checked.

BUILDING SPACES

Using the absolutes listed above, some decisions have been made. We walked through every classroom and office space in our District. Both UES and RVS can have every child in a classroom with 6 feet of physical space between them. We will have to move furniture to make it happen, but we can do it. MSMS can fit nearly all students in their classroom with 6 feet with the exception of a few classes. We will be using other spaces that may not be traditional classrooms so that those groups can be spaced 6 feet apart. MHS cannot hold its entire student body at one time. The classrooms at MHS can fit 13 students at most while maintaining the 6 feet rule. *This will require different schedules for different schools.*

HEALTH CHECKS

Health checks will be performed prior to boarding a school bus or upon entry into a building. We are working on finding bus monitors for this responsibility and developing the process of health checks on site. We are also working with city officials regarding what is sure to be significant traffic congestion at UES and possibly MSMS.

DISTRICT CALENDAR

Our faculty and staff will need to learn a considerable amount of new procedures and protocols at the start of the new year. We are looking to do parent conferences for every K-8th grader prior to commencing school so we know how your family and child have weathered this global pandemic, personally tell families expected procedures, and give the opportunity to get to know new teachers. We also know that our staff needs more time to learn better ways to do online teaching in case that becomes our reality again. Knowing all of this, *we are changing our student start date to Monday, August 31st.* We will be sending an updated school calendar home shortly and posting it to our website, but wanted to get that date out to families as soon as possible. The state is considering a proposal now that would waive the required student days and allow students to return in early September. We will keep you posted as soon as we hear if there will be a statewide change to the calendar and required days.

DAILY SCHEDULE (Subject to change)

MHS is still working through the logistics of in-person learning at the high school level. Our K-8 schools will run on a schedule that is shortened every day. We are in the process of developing a POD model at all three buildings where students stay put in their classrooms with the same two adults every day. Our goal is to limit student/teacher mingling as much as possible and control environments to reduce risk. Building principals will provide more information on the POD

model when they have been fully developed. Please see the chart below for *tentative* opening and closing times. After school care will be available through Part 2 and Bridges. We are working with these partners now on logistics and details.

	Roxbury Village School	Union Elementary School	Main Street Middle School	Montpelier High School
 Students Taking Bus Arrive	7:40am-7:50am	7:40am-7:50am	7:50am-8:00am	N/A Bus for tech school leaves 7:50ish
 Students Walking, Getting Dropped Off, or Driving Their Own Vehicles Arrive	8:00am	8:00am *UES may have different arrival times for different grade levels*	8:15am	
 Class Begins	8:30am	8:30-ish am *dependent on grade level arrival times*	8:30am	
 Class Ends	1:00pm	1:00pm	1:10pm	
 Students Taking Bus Load and Depart	1:05pm-1:15pm	1:05pm-1:20pm	1:15pm-1:25pm	
 Students Walking, Getting Dropped Off, or Driving Their Own Vehicles Depart	1:20pm-1:30pm	1:20pm-1:30pm	1:30pm-1:40pm	

CLEANING OF BUILDINGS

When school opens, we will continue to clean all surfaces with our level two cleaner that we've been using since February. This QT-TB Disinfectant has been tested and shown to kill the coronavirus on surfaces. All of our custodial teams are familiar with this product and have all been trained on cleaning high-touch surfaces.

VENTILATION

We are currently working with engineers and Efficiency Vermont to ensure our ventilation system is working at its highest capacity. We are changing filters and circulating more air for longer durations. This is a high priority and more information will be coming from our Director of Facilities, Andrew LaRosa. You can also see his current run down from the [July 15th school board meeting](#) (COVID update begins at the 1:32:00 mark).

REMOTE LEARNING OPTIONS

Yesterday at 2:00PM we received long awaited guidance from the state regarding hybrid/remote learning options. In that guidance, the state deemed hybrid/remote options permissible under Vermont law. We are in the very early stages of creating a MRPS Virtual Academy option for our Kindergarten-eighth graders. MHS will be working with their traditional online partners as well as developing hybrid options (much more information to come on this). For Grades K-8, we are prioritizing contacting families of our kids that our records indicate are at high risk to determine if those families would like to have remote or in-person schooling. Our second priority will be to speak with families of students who live with an immediate family member who is high risk. Once we have numbers regarding these high risk students in need of remote learning, we will determine our staffing capacity regarding this option for others in our community.

COMMUNICATIONS

Please find all communications from me to date on our website:

<https://www.mrpsvt.org/covid19-communication>. If you are not receiving district emails, please fill out the Communication List Revision or Addition Form found on the contact page of our website: <https://www.mrpsvt.org/contact-information>.

I give updates at every school board meeting. You can find the dates and agendas for those meetings on our website's board page: <https://www.mrpsvt.org/school-board-home>.

WHAT YOU CAN DO NOW TO HELP

Follow us on social media @mrpsvt on [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#), and [Twitter](#).

I know many have already started getting your child(ren) used to wearing a mask. This will be our reality for the unforeseeable future. To help handle my stress, I've taken to sewing masks for my two kids in their favorite fabrics. They will be decked out in ballet, Marvel superheroes, and Star Wars-themed masks for some time. I know we have many in the community who are agile with a sewing machine and we can help each other out in making masks for our kids. The staff at MRPS is doing wonders with matching shirt and mask colors!

This is a lot....and at the same time it is not enough detail for many of you. We will be

communicating more detail when we know more. Every decision has consequences that require 20 more decisions. We thank you for your patience and support throughout this process. We will get through this together. Please contact me at libbyb@mpsvt.org should you have concerns that you feel may not be on my radar.

Sincerely,

Libby Bonesteel

Superintendent of Schools

Montpelier Roxbury Public Schools