

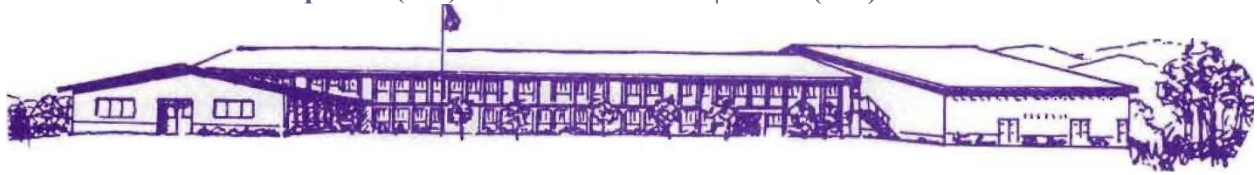
Milford Central School

Mark Place, Superintendent

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TO: Board of Education
FROM: Mark Place, Superintendent
RE: Return to In-Person Learning – Board Report for 01/14/2021
DATE: January 13, 2021

RETURN TO IN-PERSON LEARNING

The decision to reopen for in-person learning is a decision that is not taken lightly. The rates of infection for COVID19 are at their highest levels since the pandemic began, and yet, we must also recognize the school's critical role in childcare, support for students with special needs, internet access, and the social-emotional well-being of students. Our protocols have proven to be effective especially when families support our request to keep sick children at home. Therefore, MCS will proceed with our phased-in plan to reopen for in-person learning.

REMOTE LEARNING OPTION CONTINUES FOR ALL FAMILIES

Every family has the option to continue to keep their children at home and continue with remote learning. If exercising this option, we ask that families of students in grades PK-5 notify their classroom teacher, and for families of students in grades 6-12 exercising this option to notify the guidance office.

PHASED-IN RETURN – STUDENTS AND STAFF

Plan for the return of students to in-person learning.

- PK-5: Tentatively returns on Tuesday, January 19, 2021
- 6-8: Tentatively returns on Thursday, January 21, 2021
- 9-12: Tentatively returns on Monday, January 25, 2021

In preparation for the return of students, all staff were required to return to in-person work based on the following phased-in schedule:

- Non-teaching staff: Tuesday, January 5, 2021
- Teachers and LTAS: Monday, January 11, 2021

Exceptions have been made for those who (1) are medically fragile, or (2) have childcare issues due to COVID19 closures.

COVID19 PROTOCOLS

All COVID19 protocols will continue to remain in place. We have modified for staff the protocols for wearing of face coverings to read as follows:

Staff may only remove their face coverings **if alone in a room** under these conditions:

1. Eating a meal;
2. Preparing asynchronous videos;
3. Conducting synchronous lessons; or
4. Participating in a virtual meeting.

Once the event is completed, the face covering must be worn again. We are no longer allowing staff to eat with others, including students, in their room.

COVID19 IN THE COMMUNITY

The reality is that COVID19 is now at its highest rates of infection and community spread is so pervasive that no community is COVID free. The positivity rate in Otsego County continues to be one of the lowest in the state at around 6% for a 7-day rolling average. However, the Mohawk Valley, along with our contiguous regions, continue to be well above 10%. Our district is not immune to the spread of COVID with many of our district's families and our staff reporting positive test results.

QUARANTINES

Because we have been remote for the past two weeks, we have avoided any quarantines; however, the majority of districts who have been in-person have had to quarantine portions of their staff and student body. Worcester, Schenevus, and BOCES were all required to return to remote learning this week after quarantining students and staff.

When we return to in-person learning, it will be critical for families to keep any sick child home. Without the assistance of families, it is highly likely that we will need to quarantine students and staff due to exposures to COVID. These quarantines will disrupt the learning environment, and depending on the numbers of those quarantined (both students and staff), it is probable that we will return to remote learning for some portion of the staff and student body.

SERVICES FOR STUDENTS WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

We will focus our efforts on reconnecting with students and providing support for each and every child. That will be no truer than for our students with special needs. Although we have been providing services and support as required by their IEPs throughout the pandemic, there is no substitute for in-person support.

As we proceed through the spring, we will be monitoring student progress, and we will be working with staff and families to determine if there are additional supports that need to be made available to address any new gaps in learning due to the pandemic. Where the data supports providing additional supports or interventions, we will work to provide those in ways that meet the needs of each student. Discussions regarding additional support after school and during the summer will occur as appropriate for each child.

VACCINATIONS

The arrival of a viable vaccination in less than a year is truly a scientific marvel. With the distribution of the vaccine now underway, there is a light at the end of the tunnel; however, there is still a long road ahead before we reach herd immunity. In the meantime, all COVID19 protocols, including sending students and staff home who have symptoms consistent with COVID19, will remain in place until the CDC offers additional guidance.