



Regional School Unit No. 18

Phone: 207.465.7384

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41 Heath St. Oakland, ME 04963

Carl Gartley
Superintendent

Keith Morin
Asst. Superintendent

Melannie Keister
Director of Business / Finance

RSU 18 Staff,

As we wrap up this week and head into vacation, I am letting you know of a change that will be happening after break. When our students return on February 28th, RSU 18 will not require masks in our schools.

Many of our students and staff may still feel more comfortable wearing masks, and that is ok. We need to ensure that as a school community we do not make anyone feel like they should or should not be wearing a mask. Neither option is wrong. We will support everyone in their decision.

There will be a few exceptions.

1. Buses: It is still a federal mandate that up until March 18th (and that could be extended, we do not know) all students and staff on our buses must wear a mask. Students who ride the bus to and from school will need to follow this rule.
2. Quarantines: People who test positive for COVID-19 will need to either:
 - a. Quarantine for 10 days
 - b. Quarantine for 5 days, then return to school with a mask for 5 days
3. Outside Venues: If our students go on a field trip, or if we are playing a sport at another school or venue that requires masks, we will follow their rules. If the other site does not require masks, we will not require them.

For the past two years, RSU 18 has held two guiding principles as our decision-making beacons:

We will keep our schools open to provide our students with the education they need and deserve.

AND

We will implement safety modifications to keep our students, staff, and community safe.



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Because of changes in state mandates, specifically we are no longer required to do contact tracing and quarantining for people identified as close contacts, we can now remove the mask mandate and still keep our schools open.

RSU 18 has been amazing throughout the pandemic. What you as individual staff members have done for kids is nothing short of heroic. What you have done collectively as a staff is beyond compare. We have been better together. I say this with 100% commitment.... I would put the education that RSU 18 students have received over the past two years up against any school in the United States. That is what you all have accomplished together.

I know that COVID-19 is not gone. But it is time to make this change.

I have consulted with our board chair and other board members, my administrative team, nurses, the leadership of our teacher's association, parents, state officials and numerous staff. Everyone expresses some concern, but based on the number of cases, the severity of illness, hospitalization rates, new guidance and efficacy of masks, and other data, overwhelmingly people believe it is time for this change.

We will continue with increased cleanings, air quality controls, providing hand sanitizer, utilizing outdoor learning spaces and many other strategies. In addition, if any staff member wants more KN95 masks, please send me a message and I will make sure they are waiting for you when you return from break. Finally, I will be working most of next week, if any staff want to talk, I will be available.

I hope you have a great vacation.... You have certainly earned it.

Carl