

August 1, 2020

Dear Lamoille North Families:

Greetings to you on this first day of August! As we predicted, Governor Scott issued an Executive Order yesterday announcing a September 8th start date for all public and private schools in Vermont to allow more time for schools to prepare with faculty. This seems especially important right now given the frequency of changing guidance and the need to respond thoughtfully and not reactively.

Additionally, the Secretary of Education recently issued a memorandum, *Decision-Making for School District Operations During the 2020-2021 School Year*, that delegates the authority for school district operations to Vermont's school boards.

We have been hard at work over the last several weeks planning for the 2020-2021 school year. While we remain confident that we can open LNSU schools for in-person instruction with enhanced physical distancing measures in place, the Vermont Agency of Education (VT AOE) now requires us to present a range of options and strategies to the LNSU Board. Through careful study of a wide range of options, evolving health, safety and regulatory guidance, educator and family feedback, and consideration of plans from other parts of the state, we have framed options for consideration by the Board.

The Board will consider these plan options at a Special Meeting on Friday, August 7th, at 6:00 p.m.

We have received many comments from parents that straddle extremes. There are some who believe schools should not be open at all and there are those who believe students should attend daily. We understand that it will be difficult to please everyone. We will offer plans to the Board that reflect safety and health guidelines and the vast input we have received.

We will be recommending the maximum amount of flexibility we are able to offer to students under the guidelines recently put forth by the VT AOE. These models will include a fully remote option and a hybrid model with various amounts of in-person instruction. All options include a Wednesday remote-learning offering. We are in the process of looking into childcare availability for Wednesdays for the Kindergarten through Grade 5 cohort.

Additionally, many people communicated that they wanted some kind of remote option but not a fully remote option. Because of this, we will be reaching out to all families in the event they want to change or modify their initial requests for full remote learning after our principals foreshadow for you next week the plans they will present to the Board.

I recognize that many of you are understandably frustrated with this process and are anxious to know what the school year ahead will look like for your children. While it would be easy to unveil plans that appear best at the moment, we have seen many districts unveil their plans and then have to return to the drawing board because of changes and new decision-making guidelines. We are confident that we have taken input from families, staff, students, and the guidelines from the VT AOE, and will

present, given this input, options to the Board that will offer the maximum flexibility we can offer to families given our building space, staff capacity and safety guidelines.

Our Facilities Director, Dylan Laflam, and Nurse Leader/COVID Coordinator, Flo Kelley, are putting together an “Employee and Family Health and Safety Handbook” that will be distributed soon. They will both be at the August 7th Special Board meeting to discuss general guidelines and protocols that will be important for us all.

With the policy direction established by the board on August 7th, schools will dive more deeply into decision-making regarding the day-to-day details.

We know you have many questions about schedules, supports, transportation and daily procedures. We are excited about moving into this phase of planning and will share school-specific information with you as quickly as we can.

With that being said, we will be offering Community Forums for each of our school communities. Set forth below is our schedule:

Monday, August 10 – Eden Central School

Tuesday, August 11 – Belvidere Central School/Waterville Elementary School

Wednesday, August 12 – Johnson Elementary School

Thursday, August 13 – Cambridge Elementary School

Friday, August 14 – Hyde Park Elementary School, Lamoille Union Middle/High School

Meetings will be from 5:30 - 6:30 pm. Principals will be sending an invitation to you to attend virtually. There will also be a call-in option available.

Thank you again for your understanding during this time. No matter what plans resemble, be assured that our return to school will be successful. We care deeply about the well-being of your children. I think it is fair to say that school may look different for an extended period of time. We will work with all of you to make adjustments as needed and to support you in any way that we can. Our commitment to our families and staff is unwavering.

As always, feel free to reach out to me or any of the building leaders if you have questions.

My best to you,

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