

District Planning Committee Planning Meeting (8/4/21)

[Link](#) to recorded meeting

Participants:

Amanda Kozaka, Library Media Specialist, CEMS
Gallagher, Brianne, School Counselor, PCES
Cynthia Voltz, School Board Member
Del Peavey, Director of Special Services
Erin Taylor, School Nurse, PCES
Heather Altenburg, School Board Chair
Ingrid Whitaker, Grade 4 Teacher, PCES
Jess Rosie, Parent
Jason Manjourides, Principal, PCES
Jeff Thoreck, Athletic Director, CEHS
Jill Young, School Nurse, CEMS
Kathleen Raftice, Director of Community Services
Katherine Bock, Science Teacher, CEHS
Kimberly Carr, School Board Vice-Chair
Karen Jenkins, School Nurse, CEHS
Kyle Morey, Assistant Principal, CEMS
Laura Ellis, Interventionist, CEMS
Marcia Weeks, Business Manager
Nathan Carpenter Assistant Principal, CEHS
Peter Esposito, Director of Nutrition Services
Sarah Dodwell, Parent
Sarah Forrey-Pettit, Assistant Principal, PCES
Smita Sonti, School Physician
Troy Eastman, Principal, CEMS
Zakia Nelson, Parent
Michelle McClellan, Assistant Superintendent
Troy Patterson, Director of Educational Technology
John Springer, Principal, CEHS
Elizabeth Yarrington, English Teacher, CEHS
Christopher Storer, Director of Transportation
Sonia Medina, French/Spanish Teacher, CEHS
Chris Record, Superintendent

Purpose of the District Planning Committee

- Committee of stakeholders to review and discuss Covid-19 information in order to provide the School Board and School Administration recommendations on how to operate the district for the 21-22 school year

Process

- District Planning Committee will provide recommendations to the School Board for consideration at a meeting on 8/16/21 at 6:30pm

Norms for our meeting

- Be respectful
- Share the air
- Aim for consensus
- Aim to conclude by 8:30pm

Underlying Goal: Have all Cape Elizabeth students and staff safely in school full-time for the 21-22 school year.

- “Children should return to full-time in-person learning in the fall with layered prevention strategies in place.” ~ **CDC**
- “We need to prioritize getting children back into schools alongside their friends and their teachers -- and we all play a role in making sure it happens safely,” said Sonja O’Leary, MD, FAAP, chair of the AAP Council on School Health. “The pandemic has taken a heartbreaking toll on children, and it’s not just their education that has suffered but their mental, emotional and physical health. Combining layers of protection that include vaccinations, masking and clean hands hygiene will make in-person learning safe and possible for everyone.” ~ **American Academy of Pediatrics**

Current situation according to Dr. Shah presentation on 7/29/21

- The Delta variant of COVID-19 has increased its presence in Maine as it has throughout the country. Cases are multiplying greatly from week to week.
- Dr. Shah noted in the presentation he provided on July 29, information is changing very quickly, and data is being updated constantly. More and more is being reported within the state and national news as to the ease of spread of the Delta variant, as well as the impact on those people who are not vaccinated, including our younger population. Incidents of

hospitalizations due to COVID-19 are increasing, mostly for those who are unvaccinated, and many of these are children.

- **Update on 8/5/21: Cumberland County transmission of SARS-CoV-2 has risen to “substantial” levels (7/28-8/3)**
 - <https://covid.cdc.gov/covid-data-tracker/#county-view>

- **Resources for Consideration by the DPC & School Board**
 - A link to the Dr. Shah briefing on 7/29/21 can be found [here](#).
 - A Q&A document has been prepared from the questions that were submitted during the webinar with Dr. Shah, and can be reviewed [here](#).
 - [Updated CDC Guidance](#) provided by US CDC earlier last week
 - Additional resources that may be helpful include:
 - [U.S. CDC Guidance for COVID-19 Guidance for Schools](#)
 - [Maine Pooled Testing FAQ](#)
 - [DHHS memo on staff vaccination data collection](#)
 - [American Academy of Pediatrics Updates Recommendations for Opening Schools in Fall 2021](#)
 - This Rand report has some helpful information about implementing school testing, including strategies for community engagement (box 5)
 - https://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/research_reports/RR_A1100/RR_A1103-1/RAND_RRA1103-1.pdf
 - [Maine Vaccination Rates by Zip Code](#)
 - [Maine DOE COVID Toolkit](#)

- **What is Required of School Districts in Maine**
 - Masks on school transportation: currently, there is a requirement for the use of masks for any travelers using public transportation, which includes school buses and vans. This would mean drivers and any passengers.
 - Continue to have windows open for ventilation & utilize hand sanitizer
 - Discussion
 - Transportation Director Christopher Storer - Is there a distancing requirement? No requirements. There is a continued recommendation to distance to the degree possible.
 - Last year field trips were limited.
 - Implications for Cape Elizabeth
 - *Field trips?*
 - *Assigned seating on buses?*

- **Vaccination Data for staff and students**
 - Data will be collected by the DOE from every school in the state regarding the percentage of staff and students vaccinated by school.
 - The intent for both data points will be to help the state assess the locations of the greatest area of need and target supports in these areas.
 - Discussion
 - Data collected will be a deidentified collection method. Self-reporting is not mandatory, but non participation will be counted as non-vaccinated status.
 - ME CDC will report data for students according to Zip Code for students age 10 and older.
 - Implications for Cape Elizabeth
 - Develop a system for staff data collection
 - Encourage but not require participation
 - Report data to community
- **Recommendations by Dr. Shah, CDC, & ME CDC**
 - **Masks**
 - On 7/29/21, Dr. Shah shared information from the US CDC and the ME CDC and the strong recommendation is for the use of masks while indoors. This strong recommendation is for individuals who are unvaccinated as well as those who have been vaccinated.
 - Many schools serve children under the age of 12 who are not eligible for vaccination at this time. Therefore, this guidance emphasizes implementing layered prevention strategies (e.g., using multiple prevention strategies together consistently) to protect people who are not fully vaccinated, including students, teachers, staff, and other members of their households.
 - Discussion
 - The decision is left to the local school districts.
 - Thank you school nurses for all you did last year. You were critical to our success and will continue to be in the coming year.
 - Our planning will be adaptive in response to variables in the community and the needs in our schools. The need for nimbleness, the ability to be responsive and responsible will be important and ongoing in our plan.

- Does social distancing apply when students remove their masks, such as when eating? There is no distancing requirement however the recommendation is to maintain 3 feet distance whenever feasible and possible. Administrators are already planning for use of cafeteria space to provide distancing to the greatest degree possible. Assigned seating will also be used as a strategy when feasible.
- Importance of routines and expectations was raised.
- Using outdoor spaces when possible for eating could be considered.
- Because of the impact of the Delta variant in the state, the need for continued masking remains.
- Cohorting - there is continued consideration of cohorting to the degree that it allows all students to attend school full time and it will not hinder the ability to provide high quality educational opportunities for students.
- The High School is looking at lunch options and if all students will be able to eat at school.
- Why is this a CDC recommendation and not a mandate? The CDC cannot mandate a requirement. That is within the authority of the Governor. Transportation is a federal mandate.
- The recommendation we make will be for the start of the school year. As was true last year, there is a recognition that the plan will need to be fluid and flexible as the year progresses.
- Can there be consistency across the town in terms of requirements? There can be discussions with the Town Manager and Town Council about this.
- Implications for Cape students and staff
 - ***The Committee recommends universal masking for all people in all our schools no matter vaccination status.***
- School nurses & school doctor recommendation?
 - The school nurses are in support of universal face mask use indoors in all schools during the coming school year. Following the recommendation of the US and ME CDC is the best way to get our students and faculty back full time. Even with a high vaccination rate at the high school, it is important to follow the recommendation of the experts and provide layered mitigation strategies. As more is learned and with further developments, we can continue to monitor and adjust if advised.

- There have been concerns voiced about the emotional impact of masking on students. The mental health of our students is of the utmost concern and importance. Masking will allow a full return to school, which is also important to the emotional wellbeing of students. Students did well with masking last year. Masking breaks and the allowance of masks to be removed when outside is a positive that is different from last year.

○ **Pooled Testing**

- According to the ME CDC, pooled PCR testing will help keep unvaccinated children and staff safe. The early detection and reduction of spread provides peace of mind for students, staff, and families, as well as the added benefit of reducing education disruption and exclusion from extracurriculars due to quarantine as a close contact.
- As of July 29, 2021, 166 schools are enrolled, representing 50 districts. At least one school in every county has enrolled. Enrolled schools reflect a mixture of public and private schools, large, small, rural, and urban.
- This Rand report has some helpful information about implementing school testing,

- [Covid-19 Testing in K-12 Schools](#)

■ **How it works ([How Pooled Testing Works Video](#))**

- [Webinar on Pooled Testing](#)
- Weekly testing (voluntary)
 - Parent Consent is required.
- Participation in pooled testing is voluntary. Students who do not participate cannot be barred from in-person learning opportunities solely because they do not participate, however those not participating in the program who are identified as close contacts must quarantine and be out of school for that period of time.
- Pooled testing is offered through Maine DOE, CDC, and DHHS. Individuals (students and staff in a classroom) would be “pooled” in numbers no greater than 20-25, and then tested as a group. Should a weekly test pool come back positive, each individual in the pool would take a binaxNow rapid test, either at school, or at an alternate testing location. Individuals participating in weekly pooled testing who receive a negative binaxNow test result, would not need to quarantine for ten days as a close contact.
- The CDC encourages teachers and staff to participate in the testing even if they have already been fully vaccinated, though it is not

required. There are several reasons why vaccinated staff should participate in pooled testing, including:

- While each vaccine authorized by the FDA is effective at preventing symptomatic infection, no vaccine is 100% effective
- Vaccinated individuals may still get COVID-19 and transmit it to others
- Pooled testing provides surveillance testing capabilities to schools, meaning that students and staff participating in the pooled PCR testing program don't have to quarantine if they have been identified as a close contact.
 - These individuals should remain in school and continue to participate in the weekly pooled PCR testing program
 - However, any unvaccinated student or staff member not participating in pooled PCR testing program or unwilling to get follow-up BinaxNOW testing as part of a positive pool and identified as a close contact of a confirmed case will need to be quarantined for 10 days

■ Discussion

- 30% or more of the school (staff and students) participating would allow for waiver of the need for quarantine for participating students. Non-participating students who are unvaccinated and who are determined to be close contacts would need to follow quarantine requirements.
- Concern was raised about the impact of regular testing on students. Is there information about student anxiety with regular pooled testing? Age appropriate training, students would have a sense of assurance that school is safe and they will be able to remain in school rather than experience disruption. Pooled testing could actually help to alleviate anxiety.
- Also, is there information or practices regarding students (and staff) who are participating and swabbing vs. those who are not. Is there a sense of stigma, or even anxiety about this? The FAQ released from the ME CDC stated there has been no reports of this from districts.
- Pooled testing is a powerful tool to detect cases in our schools and community.

■ Implication for Cape students and staff

- Follow up with schools who have implemented pooled testing.

- School nurses & school doctor recommendation?
 - The nurses are at this time, in support of pooled testing for Grades K-12. Given the shift of how COVID-19 is progressing, the need for continued layered mitigating strategies is important to keeping students safely in school all day, every day. Pooled testing allows us to monitor infection in our community, make adjustments to the district plan as needed and respond to potential exposures, particularly asymptomatic cases, whether vaccinated or unvaccinated. If there is a case, pooled testing allows for early detection and reduces transmission to others. It also allows for continuous in-school learning for students as the need to quarantine for close contacts who participate is waived.
- ***More discussion and information around impact on students is needed before a recommendation is finalized. All medical professionals on DPC recommend K-12 pooled testing.***

Social Distancing

- CDC recommends schools maintain at least 3 feet of physical distance between students within classrooms. When it is not possible to maintain a physical distance of at least 3 feet, such as when schools cannot fully reopen while maintaining these distances, it is especially important to layer multiple other prevention strategies, such as indoor masking.
- Discussion
 - Teachers would like information about distancing in classrooms in specific situations where students are in close proximity, ie. science labs.
 - Also, the use of tables vs. individual desks in classrooms will need to be considered. This impacts how many students can be in a room. Some of the teachers use groupings of desks or tables to accommodate their class sizes and this becomes important in planning for September.
- Implication for Cape students and staff
 - **Need SOP to be reissued to help inform social distancing**

○ **Other Mitigation Measures**

- COVID-19 prevention strategies remain critical to protect people, including students, teachers, and staff, who are not fully vaccinated, especially in areas of moderate-to-high community transmission levels.

- Ventilation, handwashing and respiratory etiquette, staying home when sick and getting tested, contact tracing in combination with quarantine and isolation, and cleaning and disinfection are also important layers of prevention to keep schools safe.
- Students, teachers, and staff should stay home when they have signs of any infectious illness and be referred to their healthcare provider for testing and care.
- Contact tracing
 - Is it still recommended to have an isolation room separate from the nursing office? Although a separate isolation room is no longer part of the recommendations, school units should consider making plans to keep symptomatic people separate from others who may be accessing the school nurse office or clinic.
- Discussion
 - Layered mitigation strategies, including social distancing, are key. As much as possible, the utilization of outdoor spaces will be helpful.
 - Surface transmission is less of a concern than originally thought. Focusing on hand hygiene has higher yield. Limiting sharing will help.
 - Those students who have medical necessity that precludes them from attending school would be addressed on an individual basis.
 - As always, it's important to be able to help students, staff and community understand "the why" to the changes we are recommending.

Recommendations to the School Board for consideration on 8/16/21

- ***The Committee recommends universal masking for all people in all our schools no matter vaccination status.***
- ***More discussion and information around impact on students is needed before a recommendation is finalized. All medical professionals on DPC recommend K-12 pooled testing.***
- **Other recommendations**
 - **Need reissuing of SOP from ME CDC & DOE to guide**