

Important Message from AOS 96 Superintendent Scott Porter Regarding the Reopening of Schools

On June 11, 2020, the Maine Department of Education released a draft of the “Framework for Returning to Classroom Instruction” guidelines to assist school districts in planning for returning to school this fall. The guidelines were created by stakeholders from all regions of the state and led by the Commissioner of Education. The guidelines are organized into the following five sections:

- Physical Health and Safety Considerations
- Social, Emotional, Behavioral, and Mental Health Considerations
- Academic Programs and Student Learning Considerations
- Common Expectations for Hybrid and Remote Learning Models
- Additional Considerations.
- To access the full framework guidelines, select the following link: <https://www.maine.gov/doe/framework>

The “Framework for Returning to Classroom Instruction” guidelines require each school district to form Collaborative Planning Teams, sometimes referred to as the School Reopening Committee. Every AOS 96 school has its own Collaborative Planning Team. Each team consists of administrators, teachers, support staff, and a school nurse who have worked many hours to customize a Return to School Plan for your school community. All teams were responsible for surveying parents to determine the type of plan that will meet the needs of our students and their families while also meeting the state guidelines. I appreciate the time and effort these teams put forth in creating safe and thoughtful Return to School Plans. As state guidelines continue to evolve, I thank you for your patience and understanding as we continue to work through this process together.

On July 17, 2020, the Governor announced specific changes to the “Framework for Returning to Classroom Instruction” guidelines. The updated framework included a system to categorize the potential risk of COVID-19 spread as follows:

- The “Red” designation suggests that a region has a high risk of COVID-19 spread and that in-person instruction is not advisable.
- The “Yellow” designation suggests that a region has an elevated risk of COVID-19 spread, which would cause schools to consider a “hybrid” instructional model. This model would reduce the number of students and staff in schools, which could result in half of the students attending school on-site half the time combined with remote learning days.

- The “Green” designation suggests that a region has a relatively low risk of COVID-19 spread and that schools may consider in-person instruction, as long as health and safety measures in the framework can be implemented.
- These designations will be re-evaluated every two weeks.
- The Collaborative Planning Teams developed plans to operate each of their schools during all three zone designations: Red, Yellow, or Green.

On July 31, 2020, Washington County was given a “Green” designation; therefore pending school committee approval, all AOS 96 schools will be open after Labor Day on September 8, 2020, with the following six physical health and safety state requirements:

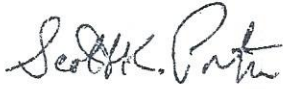
- All staff and students must conduct symptom screening at home before coming to school.
- All staff and students must participate in appropriate physical distancing.
- All staff and students must wear face masks. Face shields may be an alternative for those students with medical, behavioral, or other challenges.
- All staff and students must receive proper hand hygiene training and then practice all school hand-washing protocols.
- Additional safety precautions are required for school nurses and/or staff supporting students in close proximity.
- All staff and students who are ill must stay home until meeting the plan criteria for returning to school.

Next week, each AOS 96 Building Principal will send their Return to School Plans to all parents and guardians. This plan not only communicates the standard requirements all school plans contain but the specific requirements for your school. Also, keep in mind that Return to School Plans will change if the zone designations change. All AOS 96 schools have prepared for each COVID 19 designation (Red, Yellow, or Green). This preparation includes delivering a full Remote Learning Model, a Hybrid Model (a combination of in-school learning and remote learning), or being fully open with in-school instruction if the school facility has enough room to implement the health and safety guidelines fully.

Living through the COVID-19 pandemic has been very difficult for many people. Our lives have been disrupted, but we hope that reopening our schools will bring some sense of normalcy back into our lives. The AOS 96 staff will do their best to make the reopening of school a positive experience for all students. Please reach out to your Building Principal if you have any questions or concerns regarding any aspects of your

school's plan. It is our hope that every student has a safe and productive educational experience in all AOS 96 schools this year and in years to come.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Scott K. Porter". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "S".

Scott K. Porter
Superintendent of Schools
AOS 96