



## AUGUSTA PUBLIC SCHOOLS

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**James Anastasio, M.A.**  
Superintendent

April 9, 2021

**Katy Grondin, CAS**  
Assistant Superintendent

Dear Students, Parents and Educators,

**Kathy Casparius,**  
M.B.A., M.C.T.E.,  
Business Manager

Approximately four weeks ago I asked Administrators to research the possibility of increasing the in-person education time for students. At that time, COVID 19 cases were reducing, there was a nationwide call for students to return to school and the US CDC reduced the physical distancing requirement between students from six to three feet.

**Susan Walters, CAS**  
Director of Special  
Education

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It is important that I clarify several points that were important as the Administrators considered options. Maine has been utilizing the three foot physical distancing guideline since schools opened in September. The change from six feet to three feet did not benefit Maine schools. Maine schools have been open since September. The majority of schools across the country had not been in school since March of 2020. The outcry in many states was to have students who had been out of school for almost a year return to school. That was not the case in Maine.

In addition and very important, the required six foot physical distance requirement between students when unmasked during breakfast, lunch and snack time has not been changed. Providing food for all students in a reasonable amount of time with the six foot requirement would be impossible at the elementary level and very difficult at the secondary level. Those issues are a few of the obstacles that would have to be overcome for all students to return to school together.

Even with those major obstacles in place, the goal to find a reasonable solution that would allow students to access more in-person education was pursued. Unfortunately, any viable solution required changes that created more issues than were solved. As the Administrators in elementary and secondary level met repeatedly to find a solution, it became more obvious over time that any solution would require moving some students at the elementary level to a different teacher and possibly a different school. Those potential changes alone would not make sense anytime, but especially this close to the end of the school year. The situation at Cony was different. Bringing all students in would result in some teachers moving to a larger room to accommodate large class sizes that would not fit in their current teaching location as well as other required disruptive changes.

In addition, both elementary and secondary level teachers would have to readjust their teaching approach without the time necessary to thoughtfully prepare and the concern about safety for all students and employees would be greatly increased. More students in classes and halls would make physical distancing much more difficult and it has not been lost on anyone that the number of COVID 19 cases for younger people have significantly increased since Administrators started researching potential solutions.

It is reasonable to state that educators want all students in school in-person if that can be accomplished in a safe manner while following the six requirements in Maine's "Framework for Reopening Schools".

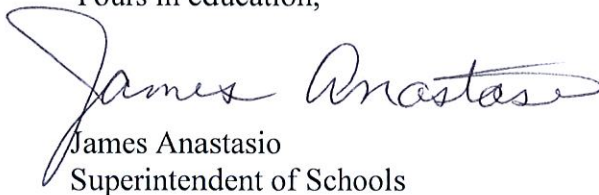
After considering all available options, it was decided that I and the Administrative Team could not in good conscience recommend changing the hybrid approach that has been successful for the majority of students. Change of the magnitude necessary to operationalize any of the options investigated would be counterproductive with little time left in this school year. Teachers, students, and families have developed routines that would have to change slightly for some and much greater for others. It has also been pointed out repeatedly that the capacity for change is as low as it has ever been and seeing the light at the end of the tunnel is extremely important at this time.

Therefore, with full support of the Administrative Team, I recommended at the School Board Workshop Wednesday evening that we continue in the hybrid plan that has been utilized up to this point for the remainder of the school year. The School Board unanimously supported my recommendation.

It is also important to recognize the outstanding work completed by the Administrative Team. What has been learned through the process will be valuable as we plan for what I hope will be all students in school full time in the fall.

Thank you for your understanding and support.

Yours in education,



James Anastasio  
Superintendent of Schools