

April 6, 2021

To Frank Edelblut, Commissioner of the New Hampshire Department of Education:

After considering the details presented in Emergency Order #89, the School Board for the Monadnock Regional School District (SAU 93) has decided to return to full, in-person learning on May 3rd, 2021. This is specifically because we are **unable** to move forward with a return to full, in-person instruction on April 19th, 2021, due to safety concerns as outlined below.

We cannot in good conscience ignore the exigent safety concerns that exist, coupled with the misinformation the Governor has considered in making his decision.

Our intent is to return to full-time, in-person learning as soon as possible, and while there may be funding available (as the Governor stated on Thursday, April 1st, 2021), this is not a money issue. This is a health and safety concern that money cannot remedy at this time.

Vaccinations

When delivering his order on Thursday, April 1st, 2021, the Governor indicated that all school employees would be fully vaccinated by April 19, 2021, which makes that date an acceptable full return date for all students.

This is inaccurate.

In Monadnock, the first date that our regional health network gave us to begin scheduling our employees was March 19th, 2021. We had approximately 85 employees on the roster to receive their first dose on that day. Roughly another 58 employees were on the roster for March 20th, with the remaining employees in our district needing or desiring the vaccine scheduled through VINI in the following week(s). This means that the group of employees who received their first dose the earliest (on March 19th) are scheduled for their second dose on April 9th. They will achieve the vaccine's protection no earlier than April 23rd, 2021. The remaining employees will achieve the vaccine's protection in the following week, which is vacation week. ***Our planned return beginning on May 3rd will ensure that most of our employees will have completed the vaccination process, including the necessary waiting period for complete protection.***

Our employees also have communicated that they would be most comfortable returning once they have completed the vaccine process. Our reopening plan states that we will consider our employees' comfort level in making decisions about our instructional model. ***Our planned return beginning on May 3rd is in line with our approved reopening plan's decision-making process.***

Social Distancing

At our Board meeting on March 16th, 2021, our Superintendent presented a comprehensive document outlining our capabilities for maintaining 3' of social distancing and 6' of social distancing. Overall, we have many areas within our schools that cannot achieve or maintain 3' of social distancing. As recently as March 31, 2021, NH DHHS [continued to support](#) a minimum of 3' of social distancing as follows:

"NH continues to allow for a minimum of 3 feet of physical spacing between students/staff in classrooms (goal is still to maximize physical distancing to the extent possible).

- *When face masks are taken off (e.g., when eating lunch) students should be spaced at least 6 feet apart*

- *If wind instruments and singing are involved in a classroom activity, the NH arts & music education guidance still applies, and students and staff should be separated by the recommended 8-10 feet of physical distance.”*

As a Board, we cannot in good conscience place our partially vaccinated, non-fully protected employees in situations where we know less than 3' of social distancing is likely. ***Our planned return beginning on May 3rd will ensure that our employees are protected if they are in a situation where less than 3' of social distancing occurs.***

Local Decision-Making Authority

On July 14, 2020, the Governor posted [this message](#) on social media:

“We all share the goal of getting our kids back to school safely, but we know each district will have a different path forward. Here in NH, we value local control, and we know that each school district will need to make the best decision for their students and teachers.”

Our planned return beginning on May 3rd is in line with our approved reopening plan, consistent with our commitment to health and safety and within our jurisdiction as a local School Board.

In closing, our decision was not made lightly. Surveys, social media, and public comments at our meetings demonstrate how divided our communities are on the topics of masks, vaccinations, distancing, and in-person vs. remote or hybrid learning models. There is simply no way to appease everyone in these trying times, so as a Board, we have chosen to err on the side of caution and safety.

We appreciate your desire to lead our communities back to some state of 'normal'. Thank you for your understanding of the exigent health and safety concerns in our district, and our district's obligation and authority to make the best decision for our students and teachers.

Scott Peters
MRSD School Board Chair

