

Dear Parents / Guardians of Captain Isaac Paine, Ponaganset Middle School, and Ponaganset High School Students,

I hope that everyone had an opportunity to take a breath, enjoy some of the summer sun, and begin to recharge the batteries after an unprecedented school year. **The vision and guiding beliefs driving the Foster and Foster-Glocester School District's School Reopening Plan follow this introductory message.** This communication contains information on the following topics for the 2021-2022 school year:

- Return to full in-person learning on 9/1/21;
- Discontinuation of hybrid learning / ZOOM classes;
- Modifications to and expansion of some virtual learning options for student;
- *Updated PreK-12 Health and Safety Guidance for 2021-2022 released 8-13-21;*
- School Committee Mask / Face Coverings Policy for Ponaganset Middle and High School;
- School Committee Mask / Face Coverings Policy for Captain Isaac Paine Elementary School;
- Mask requirements for all busses PreK-12 per Federal Order;
- Vaccination Clinic for ages 12 and older at PHS on August 28th and September 20th;
- Quarantine requirements for "close contacts" who are vaccinated and "close contacts" who are not vaccinated;
- Reinstatement of late busses;
- Use of stable and non-stable groups and physical distancing within CIP, PMS, and PHS;
- *Process to proactively notify your child's school of a possible or actual COVID case;*
- COVID -19 testing options within schools; and
- Other COVID / school reopening related information.

Before sharing some of our evolving plans for the 2021-2022 school year, I'd like to once again thank our students, families, staff, teachers, administrators, school committee, and community partners for all of your patience and support during the 2020-2021 school year.

Since the unexpected shift to virtual and remote learning on March 13, 2020, our teachers, staff, administrators, students, and families all leaned into this work, learned new technology, and embraced new pedagogical strategies. I'd like to thank everyone for the role you played in supporting the learning of our students through these unprecedented times.

This period of remote teaching created an unplanned and incredibly powerful opportunity to pilot different approaches to learning. It also reinforced that educational outcomes, social emotional health, and the well-being of students are optimal for the vast majority of students when they can learn in-person. To that end, we have been actively planning for the reopening of schools for the 2021-2022 school year.

Last year would not have been possible without everyone working together, seeing what worked, and bringing ideas and suggestions forward about how to improve. Through all the evolving circumstances there was a consistent focus on supporting students' academic and personal-social development to the best of our ability given the restrictions of the pandemic. Last year certainly brought both challenges and successes as we responded to evolving needs, responsibilities, and state guidance.

Return to Full In-Person Learning on September 1, 2021 with Masks

Last year we were one of the few districts to open our doors to students five days a week for in-person learning starting September 14th - the first day of school. This year will be no different. On September 1, 2021 our school will open to all students PreK-12 five days a week with a return to full in-person learning for all students. **As per the Executive Order of the Governor masks will be required indoors for students and adults at Captain Isaac Paine School, Ponaganset Middle School, and Ponaganset High School.** The Governor's order will expire on September 18, 2021 unless the Governor or another relevant state agency takes action to extend the requirement for masks. See below for more information about state and local mask requirements and exceptions. In addition, state guidance requires that if your child elects to travel to and from school on public transportation (a school bus) then "Students shall wear face coverings as required by federal and or state law."

Hybrid Learning and the ZOOM Virtual Learning Options Discontinued

We want to optimize the in-person instructional opportunities afforded to students. Accordingly, this year we will **not** be offering the option for Hybrid learning (in person some days and virtual some days). We also will **not** be offering the option for students to ZOOM into classes taught by teachers in our school as a substitute for attending school in person.

Modification and Expansion of Virtual Learning Options

We recognize that some students may have situations for which virtual learning is the preferred option for 2021-2022. Our draft plan includes several options for students and families to pursue their education virtually using online learning programs.

As has been the case for many years, students will be able to take single classes, or multiple classes, virtually through third party vendors. Students will still be able to enroll in classes offered through Virtual High School, Edgenuity, and the Advanced Course Network. These classes are not taught by our teachers. Students follow a set curriculum for each class that is offered fully online. Students may pursue all of their classes online if they utilize one or more of these programs.

This coming year we expanded the services offered by our third-party vendors. Students who elect to pursue these classes online will receive support from teachers and staff employed by these service providers. It is important to note these classes are not taught by our teachers and students enrolled in these classes will **not** ZOOM into lessons offered by our teachers.

Last year a number of students had very positive experiences with these online learning options. Other students had difficulty with this modality and chose to return to in-person learning. Online classes remain a powerful option for students who are self-motivated with good time-management skills. For more information about our online learning opportunities at the middle and high school or to obtain an application for the virtual learning program please contact:

Patricia Marcotte, Director of 6-12 Student Services at pmarcotte@fgschools.com

Or

Lisa Odom-Villella, Assistant Superintendent at lodomvillella@fgschools.com

Reinstatement of Late Busses

Last year, due to COVID related reasons and driver availability, we discontinued the use of late busses. We plan to offer 1 late bus for Foster and 2 late busses for Gloucester this school year to students who want to stay after school to receive extra help from a teacher or to participate in a club

or other activity. As was the case in previous years, these busses will begin their run approximately one hour after school on Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday.

Quarantine for Close Contacts – Vaccinated and Unvaccinated Requirements and Exemptions

A close contact (a potentially exposed individual) is a person who was within 6 feet of a person who tested positive for COVID for at least 15 minutes over 24 hours. A person is fully vaccinated after 14 days from receiving all doses of an FDA-approved or WHO-approved COVID-19 vaccine. As per current state guidelines, the following people do **NOT** have to quarantine if they are a close contact in an educational setting:

- A person who is fully vaccinated against COVID-19 and has no symptoms; or
- A person who tested positive for COVID-19 in the past 90 days and have no symptoms; or
- A student who maintained at least 3 feet of physical distance at all times during the close contact exposure. Note: This exemption is conditional on both the exposed (close contact) student and the infected student wearing a face mask at all times during the close contact exposure. This particular exemption does not apply to teachers, staff, or other adults in the indoor classroom setting.

Vaccination Clinic Scheduled for August 28th and September 20th at PHS

The Emergency Management Agency of the Town of Glocester will be hosting a vaccination clinic at Ponaganset High School. **The clinic will be open to anyone 12 years old or older, (not just students, parents, and educators).** You do not need to be a resident of Foster or Glocester to attend the clinic. This clinic will administer the two-dose Pfizer vaccine on the following dates:

Saturday, August 28th from 9:00am – Noon at Ponaganset High School – 1st dose

Monday, September 20th from 2:30pm – 5:30pm at Ponaganset High School – 2nd dose

It is not mandatory that students or staff receive the vaccination. We are sharing this opportunity as a convenience for families who want to obtain a vaccine.

Parents please note that RI General Law (RIGL) permits a person age 16 or older to consent to certain medical procedures. Under state law (RIGL § 23-4.6-1): “Any person of the age of sixteen (16) or over or married may consent to routine emergency medical or surgical care. A minor parent may consent to treatment of his or her child.”

To find information on vaccines, make an appointment for COVID-19 vaccination, and get answers to frequently asked questions about the COVID-19 vaccines, visit [C19VaccineRI.org](https://www.c19vaccine.ri.gov).

Use of Stable and Non-Stable Groups and Physical Distancing in Schools

Schools are encouraged to continue to use a stable group model (students remaining together) as feasible, especially in grade levels not yet eligible for vaccination. This means students from the same classroom should remain together as much as possible. As per state guidance:

- Cohorts being separated by vaccination status is not recommended by the CDC;
- Seating charts with assigned seats should continue to be maintained by teachers as much as possible to assist with case investigation and contact tracing;
- Outdoor air should be brought in, as feasible, to help keep virus particles from concentrating inside;
- Multiple doors and windows should be opened and fans can be used to increase the effectiveness of open windows; and

- Physical barriers (plexiglass, etc.) is no longer recommended by the CDC.

Captain Isaac Paine (CIP) Stable Groups – Captain Isaac Paine Elementary will maintain stable groups to the extent feasible. Students will travel from grade level classes to specials and the cafeteria as a group. As per state guidance, physical distancing is not required for stable groups. With the return to full in-person learning for all students, student desks will be arranged between 3' to 6' apart in grade-level classrooms. Students will continue to enjoy outdoor recess - weather permitting.

Ponaganset Middle School Stable and Non-Stable Groups – Students will remain in stable groups to the extent feasible for their academic classes (math, science, English, and social studies). This year students will move from class to class as they have in the past. Students will not be in stable groups when they participate in specials (art, music, physical education, engineering, etc.). Students will travel from grade level classes to specials and the cafeteria as a group. According to state guidance, in non-stable middle school groups where students are eligible for full vaccination physical distancing is not required. With the return to full in-person learning for all students, student desks will be arranged between 3' to 6' apart in classrooms.

Ponaganset High School - Non-Stable Groups – Students will not be in stable groups at the high school. Due to the varied nature of student interests and the classes the specific student in a class roster will change from class-to-class. This will be true for students' academic and pathway classes. Students will move from class to class as they did last year and in previous years. According to state guidance, in non-stable high school groups where students are eligible for full vaccination physical distancing is not required. With the return to full in-person learning for all students, student desks will be arranged between 3' to 6' apart in some rooms and less than 3' apart in some rooms.

COVID -19 Testing Options Within Schools

The state is strongly recommending that schools test students and staff members who have COVID-19 symptoms. There are three main forms of testing:

- Symptomatic Testing: Individual on-site testing for symptomatic children conducted by school personnel.
- Outbreak testing: In the event of a spike in positive cases, RIDOH will provide staffing and resources to conduct on-site PCR testing.
- Asymptomatic testing: Schools monitor transmission data to determine what level of asymptomatic testing is recommended.

We plan to offer symptomatic testing in our schools through our school health clinics. Permission slips will be sent home to families who want to take advantage of the convenience of a COVID test administered onsite to students who display symptoms.

Self-Screening Students and Staff

Staff, parents/guardians are strongly encouraged to monitor their children for symptoms of infectious illness every day through home-based symptom screening. This approach relies on students and their caregivers to identify when the student might have symptoms of infectious illness and to act (such as staying home and potentially consulting with their health provider). Students who are sick should not attend school in-person.

Field Trips

Under state guidance, field trips can resume as long as the necessary COVID-19 health and safety policies are met. Stable groups should remain consistent during field trips. This means the same classroom groups participate as a stable group in field trip activities as much as possible

Please Continue to Proactively Notify the School of a Possible or Actual COVID

During the 2021-2022 school year please continue to notify your child's school if your child is a symptomatic case, probable case, confirmed case, or a close contact of a case and have your child remain home and learn virtually. If a household member tests positive for COVID-19 your child/children must remain home and learn virtually. Moreover, if your child or a household member had a COVID-19 test and you are waiting for result, please have your child/children remain home until you have received the test results and verified that they are negative.

This could eliminate the need for other students / staff to quarantine if your child ultimately tests positive. Please notify your child's school of his/her status using the following email addresses so we may plan and respond accordingly:

Captain Isaac Paine Elementary School Families please email - cipcovidreporting@paineschool.org

Ponaganset Middle School Families please email - pmscovidreporting@fgschools.com

Ponaganset High School Families please email – phscovidreporting@fgschools.com

Updated Pre K-12 Health and Safety Guidance for the 2021-2022 School Year Released 8-13-21

To assist with the planning process, the RI Department of Education (RIDE), in conjunction with the RI Department of Health (RIDOH), issued guidance this summer for 2021-2022. Each school in the state must submit a school reopening plan to the state later this month. The state is not requiring schools and districts to offer virtual learning options. At this time the state is strongly recommending, but not requiring, the adoption of a mandatory mask policy.

As per the state guidance: "In Rhode Island, schools remain one of the safest places for students, teachers, and school staff with regard to COVID-19 exposure. Throughout the 2020-21 school year, **only 5.4% of positive cases among Rhode Island's Pre K-12 students and staff were due to documented school based only exposures** when stringent mitigation strategies were in place."

Source: Pre K-12 Health and Safety Guidance for the 2021-2022 School Year released 8-13-21

Our Plans May Change

As we begin to implement our plans to reopen schools, we must do so under the RIDOH, RIDE, Governor's, and CDC guidelines. Adhering to those guidelines will require us to modify schedules, staff assignments, instruction, safety protocols, and numerous facets of our schools. There are aspects of our schools that our students, staff, and families have historically enjoyed that are not permissible under current guidelines. For example, the option for students to ride one bus in the morning and another bus in the afternoon is currently not permitted in the guidance we received.

Please keep in mind that our current plans are based on what we know at this point in time.

As the status of COVID may change in our communities, so too may our plans. Our ability to reopen schools, and the manner in which we open them, will depend on information and directives received from the Governor, CDC, RIDOH, and RIDE throughout the year.

Closing Thoughts

We are looking forward to welcoming students back to school on September 1, 2021. Our teachers and staff are looking forward to reconnecting with students, focusing on in-person instruction, and reengaging students into our school communities.

Again, thank you for your partnership during the 2020-2021 school year. As much as we hoped the 2021-2022 would be a full return to normal it appears there still may be some uncharted territory for us to travel next year. As new challenges emerge we will draw on the lessons we learned last year, make new plans, implement new strategies, and make adjustments to meet the needs of students. We are confident that working together we will meet the challenges and opportunities of the 2021-2022 school year.

Sincerely,

Dr. Michael S. Barnes
Proud Superintendent Foster and Foster-Glocester Regional Schools

I. Core values driving the plan

Our schools are designed to be part of a cohesive middle / high / post-secondary system with aligned programs, strong transitions, and progressively complex learning experiences aligned to common expectations for learning. Our plan is focused on advancing a high-functioning school designed to:

- Ensure the health and safety for our students and the entire educational community;
- Provide the highest quality educational experiences for all children;
- Equitably serve all students in an authentic, personalized learning environment;
- Restructure instruction to foster deeper learning and transferable professional skills;
- Engage students in problem-based and work-based learning experiences; and
- Provide students autonomy and flexibility in their studies;
- Reengage chronically absent and overaged-under accredited students;
- Ensure all students have access to high-quality support from adults through extended learning, partnerships for before and after school programming, and summer learning opportunities;
- Universally screen all students and align resources to need;
- Improve and support student transitions across grades and systems; and
- Close the digital divide.

We aspire to:

- Provide a rigorous and engaging learning environment with an inclusive school culture;
- Ensure each student earns post-secondary credit(s) and/or industry certification(s) that align with their personal passions and interests; and
- Graduate students with a competitive edge in college and careers while empowering them to be designers of their own futures.

II. Hopes and aspirations for the fall

We understand that this pandemic has impacted students, families, and our own staff in multiple ways. We also recognize that the at-home learning environments for students vary greatly. Some students have adequate internet access and others don't. Some students have strong support of technologically proficient adults and some have the support of willing, but less proficient adults. Our approach to reopening schools in the 2021-2022 school year and instructional framework we put into place are designed to respond to the need to support our students' academic and personal-social development through in-person learning, while ensuring we can adhere to the guidelines promulgated by the CDC, RIDOH, and RIDE. Ensuring the safety of students and staff, while concurrently providing a high-quality education, remains a primary consideration of our team.

III. The process of building the plan

In response to the state's guidance, and to achieve our guiding principles, Foster and Foster-Glocester Schools formed a School Reopening Task Force in 2020. We also joined a consortium of school districts around the state to collaboratively approach the process of developing plans for the fall. Our task force participated in four facilitated sessions targeted to various aspects of the plan. In frequent meetings during the 2020-2021 school year we discussed the implementation of our reopening plan and made adjustments. Over time we increased the supports students and

increased the number of students attending school in-person. The development of the 2021-2022 School Reopening Plan was informed and influenced by our 2020-2021 success, lessons learned, and the feedback we received from students, families, and staff to establish tightly-aligned focus on in-person learning as well as process for full-virtual learning for students. We reviewed the guidance and protocols promulgated by the RI Department of Health to inform the COVID mitigation strategies for 2021-22. Undergirding our educational decisions are the goals and objections delineated in our Tri-District Strategic Plan.

IV. Reinforcing the need to be agile and flexible

The information we gathered to develop this plan, or analysis of our successes and struggles last year, our collaboration with other districts, our internal planning process, and our review of state and federal guidance shaped the development of our current plan. We view our School Reopening Plan for the 2021-2022 school year as an evolving document that will continue to be refined over this school year in much the same way our 2020-2021 plans were reviewed and revised throughout the year.

V. A high-level timeline with major milestones, including expected communication

Week of July 19th

- Continue internal planning for professional development and school operations
- Discuss results of feedback gathered and school reopening process
- Plan Administrative Retreat to review and revise reopening plans for 2021-2022

Week of July 26th

- Review requirements for busing in the 2021-2022 school year
- Develop process for parents to enroll in full-time Virtual Learning academy

Week of August 2nd

- Plan student supports and process for identifying students not meeting expectations
- Post signage and traffic flow markings needed in classrooms and common areas

Week of August 9th

- Arrange classrooms to meet new configuration requirements
- Arrange dining areas to meet new configuration requirements

Week of August 16th

- Finalize student schedules
- Finalize bus routes
- Provide communications to students and families regarding schedule assignments and transportation

Week of August 24th

- Arrange desks and furniture in classrooms to enable all students to return to in-personal learning while maintaining appropriate physical distance

Week of August 30th

- Teachers and staff return for 2 days of orientation and protocol training
- Students return to school