

WINDHAM SOUTHWEST SUPERVISORY UNION

Office of the Superintendent of Schools

1 School Street

Wilmington, VT 05363

Phone 802-464-1300

Fax 802-464-1303

www.windhamsw.k12.vt.us

Stamford

Searsburg

Southern Valley Unified Union SD

Twin Valley Unified Union SD

July 27, 2020

Dear WSWSU Families, Staff, Community, and Boards,

I hope this letter finds you and yours as well as can be, given the unprecedented times we live in. I know how stressful these times are for everyone, and I sincerely wish for everyone peace of mind.

I would like to provide you with a sense of where we are in the process of planning for the reopening of our schools amidst the challenges presented by the COVID pandemic. At Friday's Executive Board meeting, I gave an overview to the board of the models for schooling we are proposing for reopening this Fall. Knowing that it is important to keep you informed, I am sharing a preview of the models for schooling along with the key points that I shared at that board meeting below.

Please note that the models you will read about are not yet finalized by the board, and we are now gathering stakeholder input on these. Once the board confirms that these are the models that we will move forward with, we will plan these with more detail, and we will share the details with you.

Guidance on Reopening Schools From the Agency of Education AOE)

The AOE has directed schools to reopen and has been working to provide us some level of guidance through documents like the ones below and weekly conferences with the Secretary of Education. These three AOE guidance documents inform the work I reference in this letter.

- [Safety and Health Guidance for Reopening Schools, Fall 2020](#) (6/17)
- [Hybrid Learning During the 2020-2021 School Year](#) (7/15)
- [Decision-making for School District Operations During the 2020-2021 School Year](#) (7/23)

What WSWSU Has Done

In order to respond to COVID, we created a WSWSU COVID Task Force. Our Task Force team, made up of our principals and central office administrators, have been working long and hard since the day school ended to develop plans to reopen schools that meet the requirements of the guidance documents above. We decided to divide our reopening plan into multiple parts. First, we created a [Draft WSWSU Reopening of Schools Part 1: Safe and Healthy Schools](#) which addresses the operations for keeping our schools safe and healthy when students are learning in the building. After getting preliminary input on this part, we shared this draft broadly

with stakeholders on July 17th. Please note that while Part 1 does not address when students would be in the school building, nor options for families who do not want to send their children into the buildings, Part 2 does.

What WSWSU is Working on Now

The WSWSU Task Force is now working on the **WSWSU Draft Reopening Of Schools Part 2: Models for Schooling**. For developing this, we referenced AOE guidance documents above, and our stakeholder input gathered thus far. We also identified the following three key premises to inform its creation:

1. The safety of our students and staff is paramount and we will follow the requirements of the AOE Safety and Health Guidance for Reopening Schools.
2. Students need to be in school.
3. Staff and students need to be prepared and trained to transition to remote learning with ease and competence.

Survey

We created a two-section survey and sent it out with the Draft WSWSU Reopening of Schools: Part 1. The first section invited input on Part 1 that was shared. The second section invited families to let us know information relevant to schooling models, and to share additional thoughts. We received approximately 300 responses and are studying all of the input provided. While a detailed summary of the survey results will be shared at the Thursday, July 30th Superboard meeting, below are a few preliminary takeaways relevant to schooling models.

- 59% of respondents plan to send their children back to school, and 41% do not.
- Over 70% of respondents would like a fully remote learning.
- Many respondents told us that they would like their children to attend school in person, but not necessarily every day.

Teacher and Staff Input Meetings

Beyond input gathered during post service, we held a day long input meeting with teacher and staff representatives. We continue to hold weekly meetings with teacher representatives. From these meetings, we learned that teachers need to have regular time for planning and training in remote learning. We agree this is a necessity and support providing teachers with the time to practice transitioning quickly and effectively to remote learning, while building their capacity to provide robust learning remotely.

We Can Meet Requirements Of AOE Guidelines

Our Task Force studied the guidelines and studied our school buildings. Based on the size of our schools and our number of students, we are able to have all students in our buildings while maintaining the social distancing requirements outlined in the guidelines.

Proposed Schooling Models

From all of the above information, it became clear to the Task Force that we need to offer families two options.

Family Option #1:

Four Days in Person and One Day Remote (4/1) Learning Option

Students will have in person schooling in their buildings 4 days per week, on Mondays, Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Fridays, and will access instruction remotely on Wednesdays. During this Wednesday remote learning day, students will remain at home and teachers will provide remote learning. On this day, teachers will also build their remote learning skills, and have time for critical planning and collaboration. This will help prepare everybody to more seamlessly and competently transition to remote learning, each time that we are required to go remote.

We understand that having no in person learning in the schools on Wednesdays may cause difficulties for some families. Thus, we are proposing to offer a supervised remote learning and enrichment program option in the schools, coordinated by our WINGS (our afterschool program) directors.

Family Option #2:

Fully Remote Learning Option

Based on our learning that a majority of families want a fully remote learning option, we are proposing that we develop a fully remote model. This would be an option for families to select, that would provide an opportunity for students to access their education from home without accessing our school buildings.

Opportunity for Input

We value your input. Principals are meeting with their staff over the next week or so to gather input. Principals are also hosting [community meetings this week](#). Principals have sent out information about these meetings. Please reach out to them if you need information. During these meetings, principals will share specific details regarding the reopening of their schools. They will also want to hear if families are overall okay with the idea of these two learning options. If yes, and the board agrees, the WSWSU Task Force will move forward to develop more details regarding these options, and get this information out to stakeholders.

Keeping You Informed

We know that you have many more questions. Please know that more detailed information will follow soon.

Plans May Change

While I understand how rapid changes around your child's schooling can be unsettling, even with the best of planning, since we are in ever changing times, our plans may need to change accordingly.

Thank you for your patience, understanding, and flexibility as we work through the many details, unresolved questions, and challenges related to the reopening of our schools. I hope for you and your family much health and serenity.

Warm regards,
Barbara Anne Komons-Montroll
WSWSU Superintendent