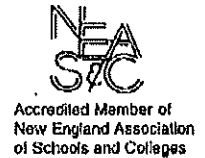


# Maine School Administrative District No. 32

Ashland  
Garfield Plantation  
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Gehrig T. Johnson, Ph. D.  
Superintendent of Schools



Tracy Long  
Administrative Assistant

Dear Ashland District School Parents, Students, and Staff,

We are writing to provide you with an update on the District's plan to safely provide in-person instruction while addressing the impact of the coronavirus in our community. Ashland District School is opening for all students on Tuesday, September 7.

As you know, we indicated to the school community in a letter on August 13, 2021 that masks would be optional for students and staff due to the low number of positive COVID cases in our community. Since that time, we have seen a significant increase in the 7-day average of new cases in Aroostook County, and the CDC has classified Aroostook County in the "High Level" of community transmission. Other area schools have had significant numbers of students having to quarantine and lose educational time. Also, our students under the age of 12 are not eligible for the vaccine for the foreseeable future.

**Effective on Tuesday, September 7, masks will be required for all students and staff each school day at Ashland District School. We will continue with other CDC health recommendations including regular hand washing, contact tracing, encouraging students and staff to stay home when they are sick, disinfecting of spaces and ventilating classrooms. Masks will continue to be required on school buses and we will maintain three feet of distancing in the classrooms and at meals. This recommendation to require masks for all students and staff is supported by the Maine CDC and the Maine Department of Education as well as our local school physician.**

In an August 12 update for schools, the CDC announced a quarantine exception for students identified as close contacts in the classroom setting. The new exception states if masks are universally required in schools, the masked close contacts of a positive case do not have to be quarantined as long as students remain at least 3 feet apart. This is welcome news for our students as it potentially eliminates the possibility of a 10-day quarantine for some of our students. This could significantly reduce the number of missed school days for our students.

Information regarding the coronavirus and its impact in our schools and community can change rapidly. We will continue to monitor local case counts and transmission in our schools and reserve the right to return to optional mask wearing in the future. We will continue to communicate with the Ashland District School community as necessary during this challenging time. Best wishes and good health to you and your family.

Sincerely,

Dr. Gehrig Johnson, Superintendent

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Gehrig T. Johnson', is written over the name of the Superintendent.

Joel Hall, Asst. Superintendent/Principal

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Joel Hall', is written over the name of the Asst. Superintendent/Principal.