

# Orange East Supervisory Union

Serving the towns of Bradford, Corinth, Groton, Newbury, Ryegate,  
Thetford, Topsham, and Wells River

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July 20, 2020

Dear OESU Families,

I hope that this finds you well and enjoying our beautiful, and hot, Vermont summer. I am writing today with an update on school planning for the fall. We are working towards safely reopening schools for in-person instruction, in accordance with the directives from the Governor and the Agency of Education. The Supervisory Union developed an SU wide COVID response team, and each school developed a local COVID response team to help roll out a safe return to school. We know that the school year is quickly approaching, and we have been working tirelessly since school closed for the summer to plan for the fall.

Our Supervisory Union serves seven schools in total: Thetford Elementary, Waits River Valley School, Blue Mountain Union School, Bradford Elementary, Newbury Elementary, Oxbow High School, and River Bend Career and Technical Center. All of the configurations of these schools differ, and as a result, communications around the specifics and details of each school's plan will be communicated by the principals in the coming weeks. Schools are developing handbooks for families, and plan to hold informational meetings in the coming weeks to articulate the details of their plans and answer questions from the school community. Due to the requirements of school re-opening, there may be a need to alter the school's daily schedule to accommodate the needs of a safe re-opening. This will be communicated out by each school's principal.

Opening Guidelines from the State: [https://education.vermont.gov/sites/aoe/files/documents/edu-hybrid-learning-during-the-2020-2021-school-year\\_0.pdf](https://education.vermont.gov/sites/aoe/files/documents/edu-hybrid-learning-during-the-2020-2021-school-year_0.pdf)

If you have not read the opening guidelines from the State, I encourage you to do so. Here are some of the big ideas we are required to follow:

- Schools will open in-person in Step 2; busing will be considered in Step 3;
- Spots where students traditionally congregate (e.g. cafeteria, gym) cannot be used for their intended purposes;
- All students and adults must wear a mask;
- We must maintain a distance of 3 to 6 feet apart as much as possible;
- No outside visitors are allowed in our buildings and the buildings are not open for community usage after school hours;
- All students and adults must be health checked at the first point of contact-before riding the bus and before entering the school building. This includes a temperature check and answering COVID-related questions. Students who have been health checked cannot mingle with those who have not yet been health checked.
- Students will be returning to school in a pod model: students will be with the same group of students through the day at the primary grade level. Adults will move around the building and come to the classroom for art, music, physical education, student services and other activities. Lunch will be served in classrooms.

Remote learning may need to continue for students with specific health needs, in the case of a school closure due to an outbreak of COVID, or for families who would like to opt-out of in-person instruction. Schools are developing plans based on guidance that was received last week from the Agency of Education around hybrid learning. As these plans are finalized, they will be communicated to families. We appreciate the feedback that families gave us after the closing of our first period of remote learning. Each school is working to refine and improve their systems, to better serve the needs of students and families in the case of another closure. We hope that we won't need to close school again, but we need to plan for a continuum of educational scenarios for the next academic year. We realize that these are uncertain times for our school community. We know that school as we know it will not look the same when we enter the classroom this fall and we will need to adapt to a new normal in our community. I personally want to thank educators for their commitment to our students in face of all of these challenges, and thank them for all that they are being asked to do to teach our students. I also want to thank families for the support you have provided our schools, our staff, and our students since our closure in March.

Sincerely,

*Emilie Knisley*

Emilie Knisley  
Superintendent of Schools

**Creating learning communities... where students are engaged and successful**