

THOMASTON BOARD OF EDUCATION  
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FRANCINE COSS, SUPERINTENDENT

Friday, August 13, 2021

Dear Parents/Guardians:

The new school year is right around the corner so I am writing to bring you up to speed on what school will look like this year with the continued pandemic. **This message is long because it contains details about the new school year as well as details about how you can share your questions/concerns about the new school year with the Board of Education.** Please read through the entire message and consider submitting your questions/concerns.

The most current information related to the 2021-2022 school year is below:

**School Schedule/Calendar:**

Unless the conditions of the pandemic change, Thomaston Public Schools will be in school as described in the 2021-2022 District Calendar, specifically, **school will run as it did before the pandemic.** Wednesdays will not be online or early dismissals days (except where indicated on the 2021-2022 District Calendar). We are back to “normal” with our school calendar.

**Masking in School:**

**Students and staff are mandated to wear masks regardless of vaccination status through September 30, 2021** per Governor Lamont’s Executive Orders 13 and 13a.

When the current school mask mandate expires, the Thomaston Board of Education will have to make a decision to continue or discontinue masking.

As you may remember, Thomaston Public Schools submitted the **Safe Return to In-Person Instruction and Continuity of Services Plan** to the Connecticut State Department of Education and shared it with parents and the community in June 2021. In that plan, once mandated masking expires, the Thomaston Board of Education was to amend Policy 5132 to eliminate mask wearing from the current school dress code. **An important change to this plan occurred in August when the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) updated masking guidance for schools to have all people wear masks in schools regardless of vaccination status.**

Even though the school mask mandate does not expire until September 30, 2021, masking in Thomaston’s schools will be discussed during the **Safe Return to In-Person Instruction and Continuity of Services Plan presentation** at the Thomaston Board of Education meeting on Monday, August 16, 2021 at 7:00PM.

### **Ending of Attendance Flexibilities:**

Last school year, the Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE) allowed students to be instructed remotely and to have that remote instruction/remote day count as a school day. In the 2021-2022 school year, the CSDE will not permit parents to opt-out of in-person instruction and will not count remote instruction/remote days as school days. This leads to two potential issues for parents:

- *Potential Issue 1 – No opt-out of in-person instruction:*  
**If a parent does not want their child(ren) to attend school in-person, they must withdraw their child(ren) from Thomaston Public Schools and provide homeschooling on their own.** Thomaston Public Schools is not permitted by the CSDE to provide remote instruction to students who do not attend school in-person.
- *Potential Issue 2 – Student Attendance:*  
**If a student is forced into quarantine/isolation by Thomaston Public Schools, the student is marked absent.**

Thomaston Board of Education must follow the rules set by the CSDE. Just the same, **the district will be providing remote instruction for only in-person students who are forced into quarantine/isolation by Thomaston Public Schools.** This remote instruction will not be available to students whose parents want them to opt-out of in-person instruction or for any other absence outside of forced quarantine/isolation by Thomaston Public Schools. This remote instruction will not allow the student participating in remote classes during their quarantine/isolation period to be counted as “present” for the school day. However, this remote instruction will provide a continuity of service to students who are forced to stay home by the district because of COVID-19.

Even though the rules of attendance cannot be changed for our students, the limited remote instruction described above will be discussed during the **Safe Return to In-Person Instruction and Continuity of Services Plan presentation** at the Thomaston Board of Education meeting on Monday, August 16, 2021 at 7:00PM.

### **Public Comment:**

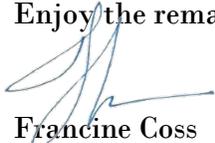
The Executive Order that permitted government boards to meet virtually ended in July. This means that the Thomaston Board of Education must meet in person and must take public comment in person. **To be sure that all voices are heard, even those who may not be able to attend Monday’s meeting in-person, a Feedback Form for the Safe Return to In-Person Instruction and Continuity of Services Plan presentation has been created for parents to submit their questions or concerns about anything described in the attached presentation or about anything described in this message.**

Please submit your questions/concerns through the **Feedback Form for the Safe Return to In-Person Instruction and Continuity of Services Plan Presentation** before Monday, August

16, 2021 at 8:00AM. Your questions/concerns will be addressed during Monday's Board of Education meeting at 7:00PM as part of the presentation.

Thank you for reading through this long but important message about the upcoming school year. I will update you periodically as the first day of school draws nearer.

Enjoy the remaining days of summer!

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Francine Coss', with a stylized flourish extending to the right.

Francine Coss  
Superintendent of Schools