

# GRAND ISLE SUPERVISORY UNION

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802-372-6921 • P.O. BOX 54, GRAND ISLE, VT 05458 • WWW.GISU.ORG

14 April 2021

Dear Parents, Guardians & Community members,

On April 8, 2021, the VT Agency of Education and Vermont Department of Health released the latest safety and health guidance for Vermont schools. This document is titled [A Strong and Healthy Year](#) and is designed to help schools and families navigate the spring of 2021. The major shifts this guidance changed included:

- The morning health screenings to be the responsibility of families to be done at home before going to school.
- Reducing the the distancing required for middle school students from 6 feet to 3 feet (except when eating which continues to be 6 feet)
- Adjusting cleaning and disinfecting requirements
- Reducing some of the cohorting requirements
- Changing the requirement to quarantine after travel to a requirement that a Covid-19 test is required within three days of returning from out of state travel. Quarantine will be determined afterwards depending on positivity.

As you know we have spent the last month exploring opportunities that we anticipated might come as a result the changes to the guidance. We devoted six community meetings to seeking feedback from the community, including one meeting which specifically asked for feedback from students. Thank you to all of the community members who attended one or more of these meetings and or provided written feedback. I would especially like to thank the students who shared their perspectives at the community meeting. As I've shared - and you would expect - there was a wide range of views expressed which were often contradictory to one another. I am proud of the way the community members shared their points of view and were respectful of one another even when they disagreed with points being made.

The criteria we used to make the latest decisions are the same we have used for all decisions going back to the development of the Continuity of Learning Plan development and include:

Asking is what we are proposing Safe, Legal, Ethical, Compassionate, Equitable, Transparent, and Reasonable. In addition we also always asked what are the long term implications. We approached all decisions with a belief that more in-person learning is always the best option; however we understood that for some families, for a variety of reasons, a remote learning option is critical.

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If you would like to review a summary of the timeline of where we have been and what we have done please see [A Review of Where We Have Been and Our Current Thinking](#) which helps explain where we have been and our current thinking.

We expect to follow the plan outlined below for the remainder of the school year. We also anticipate that next year will look much more like a traditional school year with a return to a more traditional calendar and hours of operation. Of course, all changes will continue to be dependent on current guidelines which we expect would be based on the conditions experienced in real time.

## **The Plan to Finish the Rest of the Year**

### **Elementary Grades**

#### **All Schools**

We have consistent routines, practices, and procedures in place with our elementary students. The new guidance does not significantly change opportunities for these grades. We will continue in the current configurations in all elementary schools.

### **Remote Learning Option**

#### **All Schools**

At the beginning of the school year, we made a commitment to offer both in-person and remote learning opportunities. We continue to have between 10% and 15% of our GISU students successfully learning in the full remote option, accessing high quality instruction from our licensed teaching staff. We explored many options to possibly change the way remote learning might happen should we make changes this year, but we were unable to do so without negatively impacting our remote students. In the end, following our beliefs and the criteria around equity and compassion, we have decided to complete the school year with remote learning maintaining the current configuration.

### **Middle School Grades**

#### **South Hero**

South Hero will double the amount of in-person learning time for students in grades 5-8 from 2 days per week to 4 days per week. This change will begin on May 3, 2021. Wednesdays will continue to be remote and the school day will continue to be 8 a.m. to 2 p.m. This will align the elementary and middle school in-person instructional days.

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## **Middle School Grades**

### **Alburgh**

Alburgh is committed to returning the middle school to 4 days per week, however class sizes may limit the ability to do this. Alburgh has purchased extra desks and we are hopeful this will allow the spacing guidelines to be met. These desks are scheduled to arrive at the school on April 19 and we will be working over the break to make sure that we are able to accommodate the larger classes. If a change to 4 days per week in-person learning for the Alburgh Middle School can happen, it will not begin before May 3, 2021.

## **Community Meeting**

### **Wednesday, April 14, 2021 at 6:00 p.m.**

The link and telephone number for this week's community meeting are below. At tonight's meeting I will share the plan above and will be happy to answer questions. The next Community Meeting will be April 28, 2021. I hope everyone has a fantastic vacation week.

### [Join with Google Meet](#)

[meet.google.com/yzd-szwo-tqi](https://meet.google.com/yzd-szwo-tqi)

### [Join by phone](#)

(US) +1 573-349-3062 PIN: 810 989 343#

Thank you to the teachers, support staff, administrators, students, parents and communities of the Islands. We have all had a year that is not like any other. You have stepped up to the challenges and been flexible. We have put student needs first and foremost. I feel very lucky and fortunate to be a part of the Islands Community and look forward to many more years helping to ensure that all members of the GISU learning community are curious, creative, courageous, and capable of pursuing their aspirations in a diverse and ever changing world.

Sincerely,

*Michael J. Clark*

Michael J. Clark  
Grand Isle Supervisory Union  
Superintendent