

SCHOOL UNION 76

BROOKLIN – DEER ISLE-STONINGTON CSD – SEDGWICK

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Office of the Superintendent

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“Public Schools not only serve the public, they make the public.”

Superintendent’s Memo

To: Parents, Guardians & Staff of CSD 13

From: Christian M. Elkington

Re: 11-30-2020 Update

Date: 11-30-2020

Over the last five days COVID-19 has become more real to people on our Peninsula. For many months, Hancock County was nowhere near the State Average for cases and even though we knew COVID-19 was around, we didn’t have many identified cases in our communities. With the outbreak at the Island Nursing Home (INH), and now at Brooksville Elementary School, we now know COVID-19 is fully present in our area. Our positive thoughts go out to the residents and staff of INH, and to the students and staff at BES, all of whom we wish the best in their recovery.

Beginning on Thanksgiving Day when the news of the INH outbreak started to become public, I have reached out to people at state and local levels who could provide me with much needed information. I have also been looking at data and info to weigh the facts and determine what is the best approach at this time for our kids and staff in SU 76. Today, I had meetings with our board chairs, administrators, school nurses and teacher union representatives to share my most current information and gather input on some possible next steps. I also met with superintendents from around Hancock County to get their perspective, thoughts and ideas.

Even though we have no known positive cases within our schools, over the last few days we have received a large number of requests from parents (amounting to over 30 students), for their children to go to remote learning for the foreseeable future. This is certainly understandable. Given the current situation, we will honor these requests and will not impose strict deadlines for when parents can request that their children return to in-person. This also applies to students who must quarantine. When our current conditions have stabilized and parents feel confident in letting their students return to in-person learning or students have completed needed quarantines or have received negative test results, the schools will work with you to allow students to return to in-person learning if that is where we find ourselves in the near or distant future.

Some have also expressed their belief that given the INH and Brooksville Elementary School (BES) outbreaks and associated possibility of spread, that we will automatically

go fully remote. In looking at the current medical and science information and speaking with the Maine CDC and other experts, an immediate, long-term switch to Remote Learning does not seem appropriate at this time. The Maine CDC, in fact, does not recommend that we close our schools, even in light of these serious events, because schools continue to be some of the safest places to be and because we follow multiple “Best Practices” for cleaning, sanitizing and socially distancing.

In looking at next steps we need to assess the degree to which what has happened at the INH and BES directly affects the safe running of our schools. If students, families and staff follow the guidelines and practices that we have required over the last several months, the impact to our schools and communities would be minimal! Many are asking me if I can “make” or “demand” that people along with their children follow the expectations we have set out for students, families and staff away from school. As we have said time and again, everyone needs to follow the expectations explained and set for our schools to be open and to stay open. If some of our families continue to be unwilling to do so the worst-case situation will be that we are forced to close our schools to in-person learning.

Because our schools are dealing with differing situations in terms of number of students changing to remote learning and other factors, our short-term plans for the CSD 13 schools and for the Brooklin and Sedgwick schools will be different for the rest of this week.

In CSD 13 we will be:

- In Remote Learning Wed – Friday this week.
- Staff will have a workshop day tomorrow to get ready for these three days, to start to plan for a possible longer time going remote and to review new, more stringent expectations for mask wearing, social distancing etc. recently shared by ME DOE.

In regards to planning for the longer-term for DISES and DISHS, the CSD School Board will discuss possible next steps at their board meeting tomorrow night (weather permitting). This Board meeting will now be virtual (more info to be shared by tomorrow am on date/time). Steps to be discussed will include plans for the rest of December while also looking at the time after the December Holidays as concerns about community spread are more concerning based on multiple gatherings over the last two weeks that have been reported around our communities.

My apologies for this memo coming to you later than I would have liked, but please know that it came to you as quickly as I could get it to you.

Thanks for listening!