

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: SU 76 Parents, Guardians & Staff
From: Christian M. Elkington
Re: Updates 11-13-2020
Date: 11-13-2020

October was National Principal's Month and I would be remiss in not taking a moment to thank each one of our Principals for their dedication to our schools and to their profession. Jil Blake (Brooklin), Dennis Duquette (DISHS), Tara McKechnie (DISES) and Carla Magoon (Sedgwick) have consistently demonstrated "can-do," problem solving attitudes as they have been, and continue to be, hit with many challenges during this Pandemic. Our students, staff, parents, communities and your superintendent are fortunate to have them supporting the public schools in SU 76! We appreciate their leadership and support of our students learning and well-being!

New designation: *GREEN for Hancock County. Hancock County has a new case rate that has increased over last week, so we are now being closely monitored. An asterisk has been added to our color designation by the state, which indicates close monitoring by state officials and could mean a change of designation at any point if our county's data suggests it is needed.

What does this mean for SU 76? As I've previously shared, Hancock County going Yellow does not mean that we will automatically go to full remote learning. Our current procedures and protections meet the criteria for continuing in-person instruction under a Yellow designation. We are committed (or intend) to continue in-person school unless we have an uncontrollable local outbreak or Maine CDC's science and data tells us to go remote.

It's not the kids or staff in our schools who are making the numbers go up! I want to point out that the most current data says that schools are one of the safest places for students and staff to be. Why? Because schools are doing their best to follow the Maine CDC guidelines and so there is less chance of COVID-19 spread at school. We (students and staff) are wearing masks, cleaning and sanitizing our buildings, getting as much fresh air as possible into our buildings and, most importantly, following the guidance given to us by science.

What now? In October, the number of school cases in Maine were 50% better than Maine's average. However, over the last two weeks, cases in the state and in schools are increasing and so we need to look at what the new numbers tell Maine CDC and us. Increasing spread among students may very well happen while they are not at school more than because they are in school. I can say this because the health and safety requirements are being better followed in our schools than in other locations.

Growing concern among parents. Understandably, with numbers of positive COVID cases growing in Hancock County and our local area, so are parent concerns. Over the last week, we have gotten calls from parents who have been told that their child(ren) may have had a close contact with a close contact and as an extra precaution they are keeping their children home until they get final confirmation. If more people were as careful as these parents, we'd have this Pandemic under better control.

Switching to Remote Learning: We understand that a shift to remote learning would create challenges for our families and our students. We know that in-person learning and face-to-face interactions, even behind masks, is the best learning and social-emotional environment for a majority of our students. We know that parents having to support students learning from home while trying to work and support your family is a tremendous burden. You have my word that we will continue to evaluate all aspects of risk and not jump to any conclusions. Our goal is to continue to deliver instruction in as safe and healthy a manner as possible for both our students and our staff and that will drive our planning.

Final thoughts, for now. This past summer I was contacted by parents with concerns about their sons or daughters having to wear masks. I was told “kids won’t wear a mask” or that “wearing a mask would hurt my child’s learning”. My response was that I felt they were underestimating their child’s ability to meet a challenge. Although not perfect, our kids have “stepped up to the plate” and are doing what we need them to do. As I say again and again, it is not the kids I worry about when it comes to being able to change. If adults in our communities continue to refuse to follow the Governor’s order then the number of COVID cases will continue to go up, and as a result, these attitudes and actions will force our schools to close for the short-term and possibly longer. The fact that many adults put their personal feelings about having the wearing of masks imposed on them over their ability to help protect others is certainly a sad commentary on where we are as a nation and state. Americans are much better than this!

In order for us to continue to operate the schools of School Union 76 safely, students and staff need your help! What you do, or expect others to do matters! PLEASE follow CDC guidelines, limit unnecessary travel, keep family gatherings small and take other steps that will reduce risks to you, your family and community. YOU can be a part of keeping our schools open, healthy and safe.

Thank you again for all of your assistance and continued good will and support. We are now at a point where our pulling together as Peninsula TEAMMATES is all the more important! Together we will keep HOPE alive within each of our children, within each of us and within each of our communities!