

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 and Staff
From: Christian M. Elkington
Re: 11-22-2020 Weekend Update #2
Date: 11-22-2020

As we move to the Thanksgiving Break I feel it is important for me, as your Superintendent, to share with you what I am thankful for.

- I am thankful for *all* the efforts of students, staff and parents who have followed the multiple expectations that have come with the Pandemic! A special shout-out goes to parents who don’t agree with the measures we are requiring. I’ve had several difficult phone calls and interactions and appreciate the honesty of these exchanges, but in the end, we must do what I believe to be best for our students, staff and families.
- I am thankful that we have been able to have in-person instruction for the first three months of the school year! And hope we can continue to do so as *it is what is best for our students and children*.
- I am thankful for the support from the four school boards that I work with!
- I am thankful that no one in my immediate and extended family has had to battle COVID-19 and that we have only lost one friend to COVID-19.

Over the past 6+ months I've heard the phrase "our kids have already lost so much" too many times to count. I am not saying that our world hasn't been flipped upside down or been made difficult. I am saying that what we are experiencing doesn't compare to the struggles of many around the world. As I see what families in Afghanistan, Syria and other countries are going through as they find themselves in the middle of wars, famine and now COVID-19, I know together we can overcome our COVID-19 crisis. When I see kids and their families in other countries being bombed or shot at when they try to get their kids to school, I know we can overcome our COVID-19 Crisis. When I see kids in other countries wondering where they will sleep and if there will be a next meal, I know we can overcome our COVID-19 crisis. I know we can and will get on the other side of the Pandemic by continuing to work together and continuing to think of our neighbors over the next several months!

We need to guard against a “victim” mentality and fight against COVID-19 exhaustion. Instead we should follow our kids’ example. They have stepped up and shown toughness, courage, resoluteness and guts in meeting and working through the challenges presented by requirements for in-person and remote instruction. Instead of talking about what they have lost we need to focus on the life skills they are gaining as they learn to cope with challenges and adversity. We need to be marveling and celebrating what they are able to do and congratulating them on their perseverance. Working together for the common good is what makes us proud to be Americans.

As I was driving through our communities the last two nights, I saw four large gatherings with double figures of vehicles in the yards. I understand the need for fellowship and friends, but I have to ask: "Are our kids and families really going to "suffer" if we don't get together in large gatherings during this year's holidays?" I say NO, we won't and no damage will occur that we can't recover from if we stick with small in-person gatherings. We are SO blessed that we have ZOOM, Facetime and other ways of connecting with those who are important to us in ways previously not possible.

I emphasize again, that WE (the adults) must find the OPPORTUNITIES to create new ways of connecting instead of focusing on perceived losses. We can/will create lasting memories for our children, families and friends as we battle and beat the Pandemic together. The stories that will be told at post-Pandemic gatherings will be ones that will last for generations. As we move into the difficult winter months we need to shift our perspective so when we look back at this time we remember how much we and our kids learned during the pandemic, not how much was lost. Our mindset matters and we set the example for our children and our neighbors.

Making the safe and difficult choice to limit holiday gatherings and travel is up to you. We know that both have additional risks for exposure and transmission of the virus. The United States Center for Disease Control has issued strong guidance to the American people to limit our interactions and travel this holiday season. Based on these recommendations and those of multiple other health experts, I strongly encourage that everyone celebrate the upcoming holidays within your current household only and that no one attend large gatherings.

Requirements to remember: Any students or staff who travel to any state other than New Hampshire or Vermont (no restrictions for these two states only as of 11/16/20; subject to change), will be required to either:

- 1.) Quarantine for 14 days upon return to Maine, or
- 2.) Quarantine until receiving a negative test result. The test must be taken either:
 1. In the state you are visiting and no more than 72 hours prior to your return to Maine, or
 2. Once you return to Maine.

Any students or staff who travel to restricted states will not be permitted inside our school buildings until either the negative test result or 14 days has occurred. This is not dependent on the length of time spent within the restricted states, so even visiting for one day will still require a quarantine for 14 days or until a confirmed negative test result upon return. All members of the household who travel must test or quarantine if over 12 months old. Any person who is quarantining should stay home, and not have in-person contact with others.

My HOPE is that we can continue to work together in battling this Pandemic as time is on our side! My HOPE is that you are able to have a happy, even if non-traditional Thanksgiving while we all continue to work together in keeping each other safe! My HOPE is that you and your loved ones are not touched by COVID-19! My HOPE is that we can return safely to in-person schooling after the Thanksgiving Break!

I am very thankful for the efforts made by many over the last four months in SU 76!

Thanks for listening!