

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: Coronavirus Next Steps
Date: 3-2-2020

SU 76 recognizes that everyone has concerns about the potential for the spread of COVID-19 (Coronavirus) within the United States and its possible impact on students, staff and schools in Maine and especially in our schools. It will be our role to:

- Keep our schools as germ-free as we can throughout each school day.
- Put into practice extra cleaning routines for maintenance staff during or after school.
- Work with Brown's Busing to make sure buses are cleaned before and after bus runs.
- Work with county, town and state officials as is necessary to support student and staff best health practices for flu, Coronavirus etc.
- Provide the best, most up-to-date information available from the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) to our staff, parents/guardians and community.
- Not jump to conclusions or take action based on unsubstantiated rumors.
- Continue to plan for learning and education in our schools.
- Give our students greater support and understanding as they start to worry.
- Plan for the worst-case scenario, schools needing to be closed for a week to two weeks etc., and determine what learning we could offer to students who would be at home.

At this time, there have been no reported cases of Coronavirus within the State of Maine, but this does not mean it won't arrive here sometime in the future. There is no anti-viral treatment, shots/vaccinations for Coronavirus, like there are for some of the Flu bugs we get each year and/or like those for the mumps, measles etc. **This means it is most important that at this time we rely on prevention** just as we currently do to avoid spreading the Flu and did in 2003 with the "SARS" virus and in 2009 with the "Swine Flu" (H1N1). As we await guidance from the CDC on specific strategies for schools, we encourage our parents/guardians and staff to follow common-sense strategies for preventing the spread of communicable diseases:

At the individual student/staff level:

- We ask parents/guardians to keep your children home if they exhibit cold and flu-like symptoms.
- We encourage staff to not come to work if they have cold and flu-like symptoms.

- We encourage handwashing for everyone whenever possible.
- We encourage everyone to keep unwashed hands away from their mouths, eyes, etc.
- We encourage everyone to use the anti-bacterial soap provided or soon to be provided at our schools.
- We recommend that parents/guardians and staff buy antibacterial soap for use at home.

Likewise, in our schools we will follow common-sense strategies for preventing the spread of communicable diseases:

At the Classroom/School level:

- Teachers will be reviewing hand-washing techniques with all students.
- Staff will discourage the sharing of food.
- Maintenance and classroom staff will be expected to use anti-bacterial products on all high-touch surfaces daily.
- We will be providing anti-bacterial soap rather than hand sanitizers in classrooms and bathrooms.

At the SU 76 level we will:

- Provide clear communication especially around suspected or confirmed cases.
- Take action without stigmatizing any students, families or staff.
- Ensure that our school nurses are vigilant in monitoring the student body and staff, especially if and when students or staff exhibit symptoms associated with the virus.
- Establish a process for determining whether students or staff are contracting the virus and a system for reporting updates to health officials.
- Share with families, staff, community strategies for dealing with the spread of the virus should we be impacted.
- Review all school-related, out-of-district trips within Maine or the United States (if there are reported outbreaks at the destination), and consider cancellation.
- Create a Health Work Team this week to stay abreast of all info and supports around the possible outbreak ahead.
- Create a page on the SU 76 web site to share information with parents/guardians and staff.

In closing I ask you to please remember, that while the Coronavirus news is concerning, it is important to point out that there are other respiratory viruses like the Flu/ influenza currently circulating in our schools. Fever, coughing and difficulty breathing are symptoms associated with all of them. Therefore, anyone exhibiting these symptoms *should not be assumed* to have the Coronavirus (COVID-19). And, also please note that at this time, federal and state health authorities are *not* recommending that schools cancel classes.

Thanks for listening!