

MT. BLUE REGIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICT

CHESTERVILLE – FARMINGTON – INDUSTRY – NEW SHARON – NEW VINEYARD – STARKS – TEMPLE – VIENNA – WELD – WILTON
129 SEAMON ROAD, SUITE 2, FARMINGTON, ME 04938
Phone (207) 778-6571 | Fax (207) 778-4160

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

TO: RSU 9 Parents and Guardians
FROM: Christian M. Elkington, Superintendent
RE: There are NO Enemies!
DATE: October 4, 2021

Over the last few weeks, the reality of contact tracing and quarantining has become a bone of contention and, I am sorry to say, a source of some ill will from some of our parents and guardians. The differences between a “school” close contact, an “outside of school” close contact, and an “athletic” close contact are not as easily understood as we would like. There are exceptions that allow students who are close contacts to stay in school:

- Participating in weekly pooled testing
- Testing positive for COVID in the last 90 days
- Is fully vaccinated
- Practicing universal masking

Except for being vaccinated, by following the other three above, there are circumstances under which some students must still quarantine, and this has angered some. These two points have unfortunately led to several negative interactions between some of you, our parents/guardians and members of our Nursing Team and/or administrators.

Before I continue, I must first give three cheers to our Nursing Staff, our Director of Curriculum, and to each administrator who has been involved in contact tracing along with the quality of the work that has been completed. While we know a couple of mistakes were made by us, they were mistakes made while trying to maximize protection for every student and family. We are doing our very best to balance the importance of stopping the spread of COVID with the burden we know quarantining puts on students and families.

We are *all*, parents and school staff alike, upset that COVID is still with us. Everyone who works in the RSU 9 School District is frustrated with the expectations and parameters that must be set and followed along with the adjustments that need to be made, sometimes at a moment’s notice. We make changes based on guidance from the same scientists and physicians who we believed in when they told us how to cope with chickenpox, measles, mumps, etc. I promise you, that we don’t take the need to make changes lightly, as we, like you, want our kids and staff to be safe and to stay in school if possible. School staff, administrators, and school board members are not the enemy! The only enemy is COVID!

If we are going to continue to work together throughout this school year, we all must take a deep breath and reduce the pressures we feel (real or perceived) in order to better support our students, your children. This does not mean that parents and guardians shouldn’t bring concerns and questions to RSU 9 staff. On

the contrary, these need to be shared but it's the way they are shared and the way we work together to solve problems and reduce future ones that are of primary importance to me. Problem-solving together without placing blame or considering someone the enemy models for our students how to face the most difficult of situations and gives them HOPE that the adults will protect and watch out for them!

Our students, your children, continue to impress us as most come to school and tolerate the changes and expectations that allow them to be there. They realize they need and want to be in school every day possible and are willing to do what must be done to make that happen. Each day I am fortunate to spend in our schools I witness courtesy, respect, positivity, and what I believe are smiles under masks whether seeing students getting on and off our buses, working in classrooms, eating lunch, or participating in safety drills. Our young people are staying positive while facing the many COVID-related challenges and we all need to follow their lead!

As I have said before, I believe that the most important goal for this school year is for us to work together to problem-solve together to support our students and each other. Through our actions and words, success will follow our students throughout the 2021-2022 School Year so that by June of 2022 our students will:

- See progress through their efforts
- Know that they have been cared for
- Have learned from caring adults
- Follow the example of the adults working better together
- Spend as much time as possible in school
- Eat two nourishing meals each day at school
- Have kind words said to or about them from when they get on until they get off the bus each day
- Have adults practice and model positive interactions
- Have ended this year with a renewed sense of Resiliency, Community and Teamwork.

This must be our focus.

If we share concerns, don't automatically place blame, work together to find solutions, are courteous, supportive and don't lose HOPE, we will be able to support our kids in making progress in their minds, hearts and souls! I repeat, there are no enemies except COVID!

Thanks very much for taking the time to read the above!