

MT. BLUE REGIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICT

CHESTERVILLE – FARMINGTON – INDUSTRY – NEW SHARON – NEW VINEYARD – STARKS – TEMPLE – VIENNA – WELD – WILTON
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“Public Schools not only serve the public, they make the public.”

TO: Parents, Guardians and Staff
FROM: Christian M. Elkington, Superintendent
RE: COVID Mitigation Measures on Buses During Winter Months
DATE: 11-20-2021

It has been brought to my attention that there has been some confusion over the last week regarding the flow of fresh air required on our school buses to protect against the spread of COVID. With colder weather here and winter fast approaching, there are questions about our expectations for open windows in cold, rain and snow.

You may recall that one of our mitigation strategies/safety precautions is to increase air flow by having two windows open at the front and at the rear of each bus during the entire bus route. This is a “best practice” strategy to be used to reduce the spread of COVID and to allow us to follow the 6-foot rule for close contacts on a bus thus reducing the need for an entire bus to have to quarantine if there is a positive case on the bus. In some buses we also have opened additional sets of windows about two inches to support greater air flow. These measures worked effectively last spring and during the first three months of this school year.

Recently, some concerns have been raised on the part of parent/guardians about our expectations for maintaining air circulation on buses during snowy, rainy and cold weather. It is obvious that we have not been clear in communicating the procedures to be followed and that some bus drivers were hesitant to ask for clarification of our “Open Window” strategy as winter weather approaches. We know and *appreciate* that RSU 9 staff want to do the best job possible of both enforcing our health and safety expectations and not making any mistakes that put students at risk. I take responsibility for that lack of clarity and apologize for the confusion. Based on the feedback we received, we have now adjusted the “Open Window” strategy and communicated the details to the bus drivers.

I want to assure you that we also have told our bus drivers that they need to use their judgement regarding weather conditions dictating how the “Open Window” strategy is to be used. Temperatures, wind and the amount of rain, snow or sleet falling will determine if windows are open or not. The Transportation Office will assist drivers in making these decisions by letting them know when weather conditions mean that windows should not be opened. Please note that when weather conditions dictate that bus windows are to be closed, it will mean that everyone on a bus would be considered a close contact if there was a positive case on a bus for 15 minutes or more.

In closing, please accept my apologies for the confusion caused by our lack of clarity on this issue and for any problems and concerns it has caused for some of our students and families.