

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: I HOPE WE continue to move forward TOGETHER!
DATE: 11-23-2021

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 year two of the Pandemic! A special shout-out goes to parents who don't always agree with the measures we are requiring but understand that we are doing our best to follow the best science and medical advice we are given. I've had several difficult interactions and appreciated the honesty of these exchanges, but in the end, I must make decisions I believe to be best for our students, staff, and families.
- I am thankful that we have been able to have full, in-person instruction for the first three months of our school year! And hope we can continue to do so because we know that is what IS best for our students.
- I am thankful for the support from the school board that I work with and for!
- I am thankful that in my immediate and extended family we have only lost one friend to COVID-19.

Over the past 5+ months I've heard the phrase "our kids need school to return to the way it was before COVID" too many times to count. I know it feels like our world has been flipped upside down and life continues to be difficult in many ways. At the same time, when I look at what families in Afghanistan, Syria, Ethiopia, and other countries around the world are going through with wars, famine, a complete breakdown of medical supports, or children being shot while trying to go to school, I have to think we can work together to overcome our COVID-19 crisis! I know this is taking longer than any of us had believed possible, but we need to fight against COVID exhaustion. Instead, let's follow our kids' example. They have stepped up and shown toughness, courage, and concern for others in working through the challenges presented by the health & safety expectations for in-person instruction. Let's celebrate what they are doing and congratulate them on their perseverance. Rather than focusing on what is being lost, let's focus on the life skills they are gaining as they learn to cope with challenges and adversity, essential skills for successful lives. Let's find OPPORTUNITY in the current situation and work to create positive memories for our children, families, and friends that will last for generations. The mindset with which we face the coming winter months matters and with patience and determination we **WILL** get through this together.

Let me reiterate that it is, without a doubt, a family's choice on whether people get vaccinated against COVID-19 and I respect that. As families make that decision, it is very concerning to repeatedly hear the untruths being spread about who is getting the virus. While there are break-through cases for some who are vaccinated (one out of ten statistically speaking), it is also clear that most patients in hospitals for COVID-19 are unvaccinated. Spreading rumors and falsehoods does not help anyone make the decision which is best for them and their family.

Whether vaccinated or not, please continue to make the safe and difficult choices to keep protective measures in place while participating in holiday activities, going to holiday gatherings and/or traveling. Since Halloween, we have seen the COVID positivity rate numbers, including among students, in Franklin and Somerset Counties increase dramatically. It is believed that part of this increase is because as it gets colder people are spending more time inside. Unfortunately, as the number of students with positive cases increases so does concern about what could happen in our schools and the possibility that we will have to go to remote learning sometime soon. **Everyone's help is needed** now more than ever to keep our kids in school and our learning in-person.

My HOPE is that we WILL continue to work together in battling this Pandemic as time is on our side! My HOPE is that you WILL have a happy Thanksgiving while we all continue to work TOGETHER to keep each other safe! My HOPE is that you and your loved ones WON'T be touched by COVID-19! My HOPE is that we can continue to safely have in-person schooling after the Thanksgiving Break!

I am very thankful for the efforts made by many in RSU 9 over the last three months and look forward to these efforts continuing in the months ahead! **Please enjoy the break and holiday with family and friends!**