

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: RSU 9 Parents and Staff
FROM: Christian M. Elkington, Superintendent
RE: COVID Adjustment for Monday, February 7th
DATE: 2-6-2022

As previously shared, this past Tuesday, February 1st we had a Special RSU 9 Board Mtg. to review the latest clarifying information from Maine CDC and the Dept. of Ed (DOE). Their updated guidance allows for a shorter period of isolation at home (5 days) **for students testing positive** for COVID. Students who return to school should now be masked *outside*, as well on days 6-10. Schools also must make sure that when eating, students are at least 3 feet away from each other or that alternative eating arrangements are made for returning students to be away from all students during days 6-10. Upon review of this extra guidance with our administrative and nursing teams along with reviewing our current case numbers, I determined that the current capacity of school staff does not allow us to have one plan applicable to all of our schools and so recommended the following to the School Board for students who test positive:

1. Grades PreK-5 will continue to be required to isolate at home for 5 days and then the requirement for masking outdoors, as well as indoors for *5 days will be added. We will reinforce with our staff that students must eat breakfast, lunch, or snack at least 3 feet apart from other students or staff.
2. Grades 6-12 students who test positive will return to school after 10 days of isolation at home.
3. We will review how these protocols are working at the March 8th Board Mtg.

**Parents who do not want their child to wear a mask outside will need to keep their son or daughter home for 10 days.*

Our goal is to maximize students in the classroom while ensuring that we have the capacity to follow through with the ME CDC and DOE guidelines most recently given. Two plans are required because of differences between how the schools serving grades PreK-5 and those serving grades 6-12 operate.

- Students in grades PreK-5 interact with a smaller number of staff and other students as they stay together within the same class grouping most of the day. The tracking of who needs to follow COVID protocols is more feasible. Students in grades 6-12 change classes and interact with far more students and staff each day. The need for staff and substitutes to be aware of positive cases and implement current guidance would create a logistical nightmare.
- The capacity to ensure 3 ft distance between students during breakfast and lunch is a problem in grades 6-12.
- Both the middle and high school staff are stretched so thin that we cannot in good conscience say that we can ensure that masking and distancing rules would be followed, and we risk putting students and staff at greater risk.

If our total weekly district numbers go below 45 cases two weeks in a row, the School Board did give me permission to allow PreK-12 to go to a common 5-day isolation along with masking outside for 5 days. With reduced numbers we believe that we can better ensure that our middle and high school would have the capacity to enforce these requirements.

We understand that returning to what we were expecting just three weeks ago for grades 6-12 will not be easy. I ask for your continued understanding and patience as we like you, work through the guidance we receive. I also ask that parents and guardians not take out your anger or frustration on our nurses and administrators as we are trying our best to follow the guidance we are given **to keep all safe in RSU 9**. Thank you!