

MEMO Re: Coronavirus (COVID-19)
Date: 3-12-2020

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Superintendent of Schools

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Dear Parents, Guardians, Students and Staff,

We are writing to update you on the most recent news regarding the Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19) and MSAD54's preparations, action steps, and ongoing collaboration with the Maine Department of Education (MDOE), Maine Center for Disease Control (MCDC), and our regional and local experts/resources. We understand that COVID-19 is causing anxiety both nationally and at home. MSAD 54 is working to provide you with the most up-to-date information on this rapidly evolving situation.

In an effort to keep you updated we have created a [web page](#) with our updated information as well as links to resources that have been made available to us: <http://www.msad54.org/public>

WHAT IS KNOWN

- As of this writing, COVID-19 is now in the State of Maine.
- The virus causing COVID-19 is a new coronavirus that has not been previously identified and causes a respiratory illness ranging from mild cold-like illness to severe pneumonia.
- In the event that an outbreak occurs in our communities, we would partner with the MCDC and MDOE and follow their guidance. Guidance currently is to keep schools open.

HOW THE VIRUS SPREADS

- COVID-19 is believed to spread primarily the same way the common cold or flu spreads—through respiratory droplets that are produced when someone coughs or sneezes.
- The best way to prevent the transmission of COVID-19 is to avoid person-to-person direct contact (i.e. shaking hands, etc.), to minimize contact with “high-touch” surface areas (doorknobs, etc.), and to always use recommended hygiene protocols including regular and frequent handwashing.

WHAT YOU CAN DO NOW

- Keep children home when they are sick.
 - If your child has a fever please keep them home until they are 24 hours fever free without the use of fever reducing medicine.

Teach your children to always cover their cough and sneezes with a tissue or elbow; discard tissue immediately and have child wash his/her hands. Model this for your children/others.

- Remind them to wash their hands with soap and water (or use hand sanitizer) often especially following contact with “high-touch” areas (restrooms, doorknobs, etc.) and before they eat.
- Tell children to avoid touching their eyes, mouth and nose since that is how germs get into the body.
- Clean frequently touched surfaces and objects (everyday household disinfectants are fine).
 - Enhance cleaning of high touch surfaces like door knobs, toilet/sink handles, and phones.
- Plan for when community spread occurs.
 - Ensure you have a plan to designate a caregiver, such as a family member or neighbor, for a sick child(ren) if you can't stay home.
 - Look for information from the school including on the updated website, through email, text and phone. Information can be found at: <http://www.msad54.org/public>

At the time this letter was initially written there were no cases of COVID-19, over the course of the day this changed. Thankfully planning was done with the expectation that it was likely that Maine would be dealing with this virus. There are no anti-viral treatments, shots/vaccinations for the virus, like there are

for the Flu or other viruses. This means it is important that we take steps to avoid transmission of the virus as we did in 2003 with the SARS virus and in 2009 with H1N1. As we await further guidance from the Maine Centers for Disease Control and the Maine Department of Education, we encourage our parents/guardians and staff to follow common-sense strategies for preventing the spread of viruses:

At the individual student/staff level:

- We ask that children be kept home if they exhibit cold symptoms or a fever.
- We will continue to ask staff who are ill or have a fever to remain home and use sick time.
- Students and Staff are asked to regularly wash their hands and use proper hygiene, including avoiding touching face, mouth, eyes, etc.
- We encourage everyone to avoid travel when possible, especially to large gatherings in areas where there are known COVID-19 cases.

At the classroom/school level:

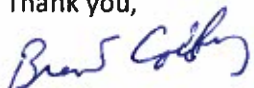
- We will reach out, as is our current protocol, anytime a student is found to have a fever or be sick.
- Teachers & nursing staff will be reviewing hygiene protocols with students (i.e. handwashing, other)
- Staff will discourage the sharing of personal items, including food, etc.
- Teachers will have anti-viral disinfectant spray bottles available for classroom use.
- Custodial staff will continue to follow cleaning protocols including increased frequency in high-travel areas and high-touch surfaces.

At the District Level, MSAD 54 will:

- Follow the guidance of the Governor to cancel any and all gatherings of 250 people or more outside of our regular school day. As of now the guidance for schools has been to not cancel.
- Be in regular communication with state and local agencies regarding best practices for schools.
- Provide ongoing communication re: this topic including directly communicating with parents and our communities and by regularly updating our website: <http://www.msad54.org/public>
- Convene ongoing district administrative, crisis team, nursing staff, and school-staff meetings as necessary to inform and share information and to adjust plans based on guidance from the State.
- Review all school-related programming, especially field trips, including in and out-of-district trips.
- Review protocols to ensure regular ongoing best-practices are followed with respect to the cleaning of each school bus, in our preparation and distribution of food, and other district-wide programs.
- Work with area Schools and Superintendents to coordinate our responses to be consistent and best ensure the well-being of our students and communities.

MSAD 54 will continue to monitor the situation and adjust our practice to best ensure the safety of our students, staff and our communities. As of now schools have been given guidance to stay open while cancelling any and all non-essential gatherings outside of the school day, of 250 or more people. We began cancelling activities/field trips/etc. earlier this week and are prepared for this next step. Because information is fluid with ongoing guidance from Maine CDC - we urge people to stay informed, to follow the recommended precautions provided by the Maine CDC, and National CDC, and to continue to check our website for updated information.

Thank you,



Brent Colbry

Superintendent of Schools

For more information from the CDC visit our website or the CDC directly:

<https://www.maine.gov/dhhs/mecdc/infectious-disease/epi/airborne/coronavirus.shtml>