March 4, 2020

Dear RSU 24 Parents and Guardians,

RSU 24 recognizes there are concerns about the potential for the spread of COVID-19 (Coronavirus) within the United States and its possible impact on students, staff and schools in Maine. As we have done in the past ("SARS" virus in 2003 and the "Swine Flu H1N1" in 2009), RSU 24 will follow the guidance of the Maine CDC in conjunction with the frequent updates and communications we receive from the Maine Department of Education.

What is known at this time (3/3/2020):

- The virus causing COVID-19 is a new coronavirus that has not been previously identified and causes respiratory illness ranging from a mild cold-like illness to severe pneumonia.
- Most (81%) of people diagnosed with COVID-19 in China had mild disease, including most children.
- Similar to influenza, the people who are most likely to have severe disease and complications from COVID-19 are older individuals (>60 years old) and those with other medical conditions like heart and lung disease or diabetes.
- There is no vaccine or treatment currently available for COVID-19 but the National Institute of Health is evaluating treatments and developing a vaccine already.
- Currently, there is NO confirmed community spread of COVID-19 in Maine, meaning the virus is not being spread from person-to-person. However, experts predict there will eventually be community spread, and our schools are preparing if this does happen.

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.
- People who are most at risk of becoming infected with COVID-19 are those who have been in close contact (within about 6 feet) with someone who has the disease.
- People are thought to be most contagious when they are most symptomatic (the sickest).
• Some spread of the virus might be possible before a person has symptoms; there have been reports of this with COVID-19, but this is not thought to be the main way the virus spreads.

During this time RSU 24 will:

• Put into practice extra cleaning routines for maintenance and transportation staff during and after school.
• Work with county, town, and state officials as is necessary to support student and staff best health practices for flu, Coronavirus etc.
• Provide the best, most up-to-date information available from the Maine Center of Disease Control & Prevention to our staff, parents/guardians and community that directly affects RSU 24.
• Teachers will be reviewing hand-washing techniques with all students, and the use of hand sanitizing dispensers located throughout the school.
• Staff will discourage the sharing of food.
• Maintenance staff will be using antibacterial products on all high-touch surfaces daily.

We ask parents and guardians to:

• Keep your children home when they exhibit flu-like symptoms
  ○ Students (and parents/guardians) who are ill, especially with acute respiratory symptoms (not allergies or chronic conditions), should stay home;
• Remind your children to always cover their cough and sneezes with a tissue or elbow;
• Remind your children to wash their hands with soap and water (or use a hand sanitizer) after they touch their face, use the restroom, and before they eat
• Remind your children to avoid touching their mouth and nose since that is how germs get into the body;
• Clean and disinfect frequently touched surfaces and objects. (everyday household disinfectants are fine);
• Make plans for the potential for “community spread” of the virus to occur
  ○ Ensure you have a plan to designate a caregiver, such as a family member or neighbor, if you are unable to stay home with your child.
• Maintain awareness of the school communications

RSU 24 will continue to monitor the local, state, and national situation, and we will work with the Maine CDC and the Maine Department of Education. Our nurses have been involved in developing our response to this situation and are working diligently to make sure that our students are safe. Please visit the RSU 24 website at www.RSU24.org, for informational links and information on COVID-19.

Sincerely,

Michael Eastman
RSU 24 Superintendent of Schools