

Kittery

School District

Truth & Knowledge

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TO: KITTERY SCHOOL DISTRICT FAMILIES AND STAFF
FROM: ERIC WADDELL *Eric*
DATE: MARCH 10, 2020 (12:00 PM)
RE: COVID-19 UPDATE

As I compose this communication with our families and staff in the Kittery School District, I am aware that the Maine CDC is completing its first round of testing for the Coronavirus. As a result of those tests, it is certainly possible that Maine will have its first confirmed cases of Covid-19, and it is also possible that those cases could be here in York County. The situation is evolving rapidly.

Here is what we are doing:

- We continue to monitor student and staff attendance, and we continue to encourage students and staff to stay home if they feel sick. We always do this during flu season and certainly even more vigilantly now with Covid-19.
- We continue to ask families and employees to notify their school nurse if they experience symptoms of **fever, cough, and shortness of breath** AFTER THEY HAVE CONTACTED THEIR HEALTHCARE PROVIDER.
- We are in regular communication with Maine CDC and the Maine Department of Education.
- We remain vigilant with cleaning surfaces, fixtures, railings, and other areas in our schools where the spread of germs is likely.
- Our transportation company is employing similar preventive cleaning measures in the school buses.
- We are ensuring that our school restrooms are fully stocked with soap and paper towels, and that all hand sanitizer dispensers are filled.
- We continue to insist on proper hygiene for our students and staff; teachers of younger students are reminding children how to properly wash their hands and cover their cough/sneeze. All students are being reminded NOT to touch their mouths and noses.
- We are working closely with the School Nutrition staff to ensure that tables are being properly washed and sanitized between lunches. We are also considering what other measures we can take in the cafeteria that will reduce the risk of spreading germs.

The Leadership Team met yesterday morning and evaluated the potential circumstances that could result in a school closure due to Covid-19. We agreed that a short-term school closing may result if:

- The Maine CDC reports to me that a student or staff member is diagnosed with Covid-19. The closure would give our custodial and maintenance staff the time to deep clean potentially affected areas of the schools in order to mitigate the risk of spreading the virus.
- There are more teacher absences than we can safely cover with our staff and substitute teacher pool.

In both cases, a school closure would very likely be temporary and could be covered with one of the two remaining 'storm days' that we have not used this winter. Though the chance for prolonged school closure is low, our Leadership Team continues to discuss how student learning would continue should our school be closed for longer than a day or two. We are developing strategies for providing age-appropriate, remote lessons to students, taking accessibility into consideration, as well as tools for staying connected as a community should it become necessary. We will communicate more details around what this will look like as it becomes necessary.

If your children are like my own, they have been inundated with news stories about the virus, and I worry about the impact this is having on them. There are many resources to help you talk to your children about Covid-19; I found this resource (including a 4-minute video) to be especially helpful:

- <https://childmind.org/article/talking-to-kids-about-the-coronavirus/>

As for me, I am seeking my information from two sources—the **Maine CDC** and the **Maine Department of Education**. I found their presentation to Maine Superintendents last Friday to be very helpful. I would encourage you to access their information as well. Here are the links:

- <https://www.maine.gov/doe/covid-19>
- <https://www.maine.gov/dhhs/mecdc/infectious-disease/epi/airborne/coronavirus.shtml>

During what is probably a challenging and confusing time for us all, I have been struck by the patience, support, and resilience I've already seen in our community as we tackle these challenges. Our families are our greatest resource. Should our schools need to close or if the situation changes quickly, we will notify you directly via School Messenger. If the situation remains stable, I will continue to update our school community regularly.

Finally, **the health and safety of our students, staff, and families is our absolute priority**. The Leadership Team and School Committee will make all decisions about Covid-19 through that lens.