

Kittery

School District

Truth & Knowledge

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March 12, 2021

Dear friends...

Another week has passed, and in spite of the lovely weather, it has been a trying time for us here in the Kittery School District. The Governor's announcement last week regarding vaccines and school staff has created a level of stress and anxiety among our hardworking employees like I've never seen before. We are making headway in the vaccination arena, but supply chains--particularly here in Maine--are hampering the process. Teachers waking at midnight to check vaccine sites only to be met with deadends, waitlists, and waste lists have been exasperating at best and disheartening at worst. That, coupled with the concern for older family members who remain unvaccinated and for younger family members for whom a vaccine is not yet available, has made for a most challenging week.

But better days are coming! I predict that Maine will drop its school staff residency requirement, and more inventory will result in more vaccine sites for our staff. Call me a Pollyanna, but I predict that any school staff member who wants a vaccine will have at least the first dose by the end of March. Mark my words!

Today the Department of Education reviewed Maine county classifications of the Health Advisory System, and York County continues with a GREEN classification. Here in the District, we have had no positive cases on any of the campuses since returning from February break. Let's keep that streak alive by masking up, keeping your distance, washing your hands often, and staying home when you feel sick. Those are simple ways to keep everyone safe and healthy!

Believe it or not, it is time to begin thinking about Phase IV of our reopening plan which begins April 12th. That means families have two weeks (until March 26th) to decide if you want your student to maintain their current status (full onsite, full remote, or a mixture of both) or make a change. Our principals and Ledgemere, our school bus transportation partner, need two weeks to make necessary adjustments before the start of Phase IV. Maintaining the status quo requires no action from families. A change must be requested via email to your student's principal. Remember; March 26th is the deadline for that.

Speaking of Phase IV, the principals and teacher leaders in each building have been discussing changes to the eight weeks of Phase IV following April break. There will be several at each school, and I will detail those in my weekly communication with you next Friday. With continued vaccination efforts, declining infection rates, and warmer spring weather (and the tents returning in April!), it is time to look at expanding onsite opportunities for students. Watch for details next week.

Finally today, I want to acknowledge the first anniversary of the arrival of COVID 19 in Maine and the subsequent shutdown that resulted during that most difficult time last spring. It was a traumatic time for everyone--students and adults alike, and marking trauma anniversaries can be therapeutic as well as challenging. If families, students, or staff need help during this time, I hope you will reach out to your principal, your school counselor, or your own personal support system. Find a healthful way to cope with the stress of the first anniversary of COVID 19. Our

District has also partnered with a talented LCSW who is ready to help! Just let your principal know, and we'll take it from there.

Enjoy the weekend, set your clocks ahead before you go to bed Saturday night, and enjoy the extra hour of daylight beginning on Sunday.

With you all the way...

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Eric", with a long, sweeping horizontal line extending to the right.

Eric Waddell
Superintendent of Schools