

Maine School Administrative District No. 11

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Dear Staff, Students, and Families/Caregivers:

In my most recent letter to you, I commented that our situation can change daily, even hourly resulting from new COVID cases. Today, our situation has changed once again. We just learned of some additional positive cases at the high school, including both students and staff. The impact of these new cases increases the number of students and staff that need to quarantine and extends the length of time the high school must remain in 'Red'.

Due to the new cases at the Gardiner Area High School (GAHS), the anticipation of additional cases and the health and safety concerns at the Gardiner Regional Middle School (GRMS) stemming from existing positive cases, GAHS and GRMS will remain operating fully remote (Red) through the holiday season. In-person instruction will resume on Monday, January 4, 2021.

For the time being, the instructional model for the elementary schools remain unchanged. As of today:

- Pittston-Randolph Consolidated School (PRCS) in 'Red' through Monday, December 7. On Tuesday, December 8, PRCS will shift back to operating in the 'Yellow/Hybrid' model.
- River View Community School (RV) is in 'Red' through Tuesday, December 15. On Thursday, December 17, RV will shift back to operating in the 'Yellow/Hybrid' model.
- Laura E. Richards School (LER) and Helen Thompson School (HT) are currently operating in the 'Yellow/Hybrid'.

The shift to 'Red' for GAHS and GRMS was not a decision made lightly. Daily, MSAD 11 administration and nurses must address the impact from the increasing number of positive COVID cases in our communities. Our ability to manage the fluctuating amount of close contacts and quarantining has become overwhelming and unmanageable at both of these schools. With only six in-person days between December 14 (the day both schools were scheduled to return to operating in the "Yellow/Hybrid" model - Cohort A - 4 days and Cohort B - 2 days) and the holiday break, it has been decided that a shift to 'Red' is the best way to respond to the current situation.

Again, it is extremely important to monitor yourself or your children for signs and symptoms. Call a health care provider if symptoms start. Stay home if you are sick.

COVID-19 is a respiratory illness that ranges from mild to severe. It can be more severe in adults 60 years and older and in those with underlying conditions. The virus mainly spreads when an infected person coughs or sneezes and an uninfected person breathes in the virus. Signs and symptoms include:

- fever or chills
- shortness of breath or difficulty breathing
- muscle or body aches
- new loss of taste or smell
- congestion or runny nose
- diarrhea
- cough
- fatigue
- headache
- sore throat
- nausea or vomiting

Please keep in mind that many things can cause respiratory illness, so students and staff should be up-to-date on influenza and routine vaccinations.

Maine CDC or a school representative will contact you directly if you are identified as a close contact of someone who tested positive. Close contacts will be asked to quarantine for 14 days from last exposure to the positive individual. If you are not contacted, you do not need to quarantine.

A negative test result does not get an individual out of quarantine. Maine CDC recommends prevention measures to prevent the spread of COVID-19. These measures include proper handwashing with soap and warm water, which is especially important after using the bathroom, before eating, and after blowing your nose, coughing, or sneezing. When soap and water is not available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer with at least 60 percent alcohol. Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands and avoid close contact with people who are sick. Cover your cough or sneeze into a tissue, then throw the tissue in the trash. Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces using a regular household cleaning spray or wipe.

Questions can be directed to the school nurse in your child's school. For general COVID-19 questions, dial 211 (or 1-866-811-5695). You can also text your ZIP code to 898-211 or email info@211maine.org. Call a health care provider with questions about your symptoms. More information can be found at www.maine.gov/dhhs/coronavirus or www.cdc.gov/coronavirus.

Thank you again for your patience and understanding. I know this is an especially difficult time for many of you, especially when your children are not in school. Please be assured that we continue to strive for all students to be back in school. Following the holiday season, once again we plan to explore the feasibility of shifting to 'Green'.

I hope you all enjoy this weekend's snow storm.

Be well,

Patricia Hopkins
Superintendent of Schools