



Regional School Unit No. 18

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RSU 18 Community,

As the saying goes, March comes in like a lion and goes out like a lamb. Well, a year ago March definitely came in like a lion. March of 2020 brought COVID-19, shut down of the schools across the state and genuine fear of the unknown. Unfortunately, that lion has been sitting on our doorstep for nearly a year now. But with more vaccinations arriving daily, positive test rates some of the lowest in the nation, and infection rates now below 1.0 in the state of Maine, going out like a lamb is on the horizon.

With February vacation behind us and students back in school, I continue to be in awe of the RSU 18 staff. I could tell you a story individually about all 600 of them and how that person has helped to keep our students and staff safe and our schools open. From additional cleaning protocols, to unique classroom configurations, teaching and listening to students, lunch time that is spread out around the building, and on and on. This past vacation was definitely a needed break in our schools, but we are glad to be back and no matter what the groundhog predicted we are ready for spring.

In Mid-January, the 7-day average for new cases in Maine was 625. As of today, the 7-day average is 145. That is right direction and great news for our state. However, we still have a ways to go and all of the requirements that schools have to follow are still in place. Please stay strong and continue to monitor your children for symptoms before sending them to school.

We did have a couple of cases in our schools this week, one in China and one in Oakland. Both impacted relatively small numbers of people, but for those identified as close contacts this is still very disruptive to your lives and nerve wracking. I am so sorry our community is still dealing with this; I hope everyone who was a close contact this week remains healthy.

I have received a lot of questions from parents and staff about COVID testing. Are we testing everyone? How often? Does that mean you don't have to quarantine? Some good questions. Here is what I received this week from the DOE / CDC. If a staff member is a close contact AND that staff member is symptom free AND keeping that staff member in school is important to provide the continuity of education, then the district can offer COVID testing to that staff member. If the staff member remains negative, then the staff member can continue to work in school. Outside of school they would still have to honor the quarantine period. This is just another tool we now have in our effort to continue providing education and important socialization for our students and keeping our schools open.

We are not testing students at this time. But I have heard from many people that getting a testing appointment in the community is fairly easy at this point. Stay safe and stay healthy. We are getting through this.

Carl Gartley
Superintendent of Schools
#WeAreRSU18