

MSAD 08 - VINALHAVEN SCHOOL
Office of the Superintendent

TO: MSAD 08 Community

Date: March 13, 2020

From: Tonya Arnold

Dear Community,

As you are likely aware, there are now several cases of coronavirus in our state. A world-wide pandemic is something we have never experienced -- so we are taking the threats before us very seriously indeed. We are very fortunate that ours is such a close-knit, caring and dedicated school community whose members are always willing to go the extra mile and extend our hand to help others, even in areas outside of our comfort zones. Thus, I am certain that all parties will continue to collaborate to ensure the safety, resilience and well-being of our students, families, staff and community members.

Today we connected once again with school staff and state and local experts, and reviewed the new notices and public statements from state and federal officials. The mid-coast superintendent group is also collaborating to reach the best plans for our region of the state. Here is the resulting current response plan, which will be updated and shared as regularly as necessary.

- School Closure - We are not yet closing down our school system but know that we may well be required to do so at some point. Parents who choose to keep their children home during this period of uncertainty may be assured that these absences will be EXCUSED absences. In order to prepare for the possibility of remote learning, we have scheduled two early release days for Monday and Tuesday:

- Monday 3/16 – Students dismiss @ Noon. Staff work full day planning.
- Tuesday 3/17 – Students dismiss @ Noon. Staff work full day planning.

- Learning Materials for Remote School Days - If we eventually need to close school for this, students may be provided with learning materials for two weeks worth of learning activities and materials in the areas of math, reading, and writing, including books, worksheets, and games. Students who are very accustomed to using online learning modules and other e-resources will be able to continue to access from home. Please let your student's homeroom teacher know if there is not internet service in your home. Staff will be refining plans tailored to each grade level during our early release days.

- Disinfecting schools and bus – The school and bus will be disinfected after each use by facilities staff and throughout the day staff have resources for intermittent additional cleaning as

needed.

- Cancellations - All school assemblies, concerts, theatrical productions, and large-group events will be postponed until further notice, as well as all student and staff trips for off island learning such as field trips and class trips.
- Spring Sports - The MPA has moved the start date of all spring sports until April 27 with all games and athletic events postponed until mid-May.
- Visitors to Schools - All community activities and events using school facilities are cancelled until April 27th to minimize non-student or staff traffic so that our disinfecting can have maximum effect.

Of course, parent drop of an pick up and contracted services for physical therapy, occupational therapy, speech therapy, counseling and the like, but we will limit discretionary visits to our schools by guest speakers, volunteers and community partners.

- Travel - Travel by students, families and staff is strongly discouraged. Those who travel out of state or out of the country need to be aware that we must prevent students and staff from returning to school, based on the recommendations of CDC (Center for Disease Control), for a 14 day self-quarantine from the date of return home.
- Communication - Updates will be sent by email, Facebook, and robo-call where appropriate. Some of our updates will also be shared on the town website.
- Decision Making – If community members of Vinalhaven become exposed or diagnosed with COVID-19, please notify Amanda as soon as possible. Once I have the information, I will communicate with CDC and we will follow the recommendations made by CDC, DOE, and our local public health officials as to when individuals of concern may return to school or if school closure is warranted.
- MEA Testing (grades 3 – 8) and SAT Testing - Maine continues to work under the assumption that we will be able to begin state MEA testing later in March as planned. There is a testing window during which schools are expected to do the testing. Should Maine schools be impacted with COVID-19, there is the possibility of extending the assessment window to provide additional time to administer the assessments. The DOE is asking College Board about the possibility for changing the date of the SAT, but at this time April 14th is the date.
- Education -
 - Medical Information: We do have cases of Flu B in our community, but this is not as concerning as COVID19. While we should practice the same hygiene and increased cleaning

practices to help avoid the spread of Flu B as well, the preventive quarantine is not necessary for the flu. However, sick or symptomatic students and staff should stay home to rest and recover.

Please be sure to call us to report reasons that your child may be absent. Amanda will need to collect information about whether the absence is for a preventive quarantine following travel or if your child is sick. If sick, we need to record which symptoms are present.

Here is a link to the CDC with tips of ways to help promote frequent and thorough hand washing and cleaning with children.

<https://www.cdc.gov/handwashing/handwashing-family.html>

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- Mental Health Resources: The school counselor or other mental health providers may be able to help or provide resources. Generally, try to stay calm yourself around children, maintain normal routines as much as possible, shield from media coverage (especially if you are not present to discuss/explain), look for non-verbal signs of stress and practice stress management strategies like soothing activities, deep breaths, mindfulness practices, distract with fun, hugs and reassurance by focusing on the positive aspects of the data about how so many are safe or the very high percentage that only get very mild symptoms.

Here is a link to an article with tips for each age group.

<https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/smart-parenting-smarter-kids/202003/how-talk-kids-and-teens-about-the-coronavirus>

- **Thank you** - Thank you for your patience and the work you will do as we manage this extraordinary and evolving situation. In hard times, our community is loving, dedicated to our students, and extremely resourceful. Working together will allow us to meet this challenge and ensure the health and safety of everyone in our community. Please feel free to be in touch with me and with other members of our administrative team with any questions or concerns.

Please know, too, that the volume of emails and calls have increased exponentially as COVID-19 has done, and that we will do our very best to respond to you individually as soon as possible.

As mentioned in other notices, I will plan to send an update weekly, and more frequently if necessary.

Keep calm, and stay kind and clean.