



Maine Regional School Unit #22

Hampden, Newburgh, Winterport, Frankfort

24 Main Road North • Hampden, ME 04444 • Phone (207) 862-3255 • Fax (207) 862-2789

RICHARD A. LYONS
Superintendent of Schools
rlyons@rsu22.us

REGAN NICKELS
Assistant Superintendent for Business
nickels@rsu22.us

April 8, 2020

Dear RSU 22 Families,

Last night our Maine Education Commissioner sent out a notice recommending remote/distance learning statewide for the remainder of the 2019-2020 school year. You can find her notice in its entirety at the following link:

<https://mainedoeneews.net/2020/04/07/priority-notice-updated-recommendations-and-guidance-from-commissioner-makin-for-remainder-of-19-20-school-year/>

Ultimately this announcement means that RSU 22 students will not return to our school buildings this spring and that the district will continue with remote learning for the remainder of the school year. Spring sports will not occur and events and traditions we have come to expect will need to be reimaged. We want to assure parents of graduating seniors that we will be actively seeking input about how we can celebrate this academic milestone. If you have ideas for an alternative to the typical Hampden Academy graduation, Principal Tracy welcomes you to email him at tracy@rsu22.us. We will also be seeking ideas from our seniors themselves. 8th grade promotion will also be discussed.

RSU 22 will be pausing for the planned spring vacation from April 20th-24th. We have been in constant communication with our regional school district partners; all which intend to take April vacation as well. The reasons for the April break are two-fold. RSU 22 came out very strong to provide a one-day turnaround to remote learning at all grade levels. This type of work is new to everyone. Our teachers, support staff and administrators have put in significant effort to give lift off to the many learning experiences, technology platforms and communications necessary to support the system. By April 20th it will be time for a week of reflection and rejuvenation and then return to see the school year through.

Secondly, last week's parent survey offered insight that the number one challenge for parents was getting their children to engage in school work. We know the last three weeks have not been easy for parents, especially in multiple child homes, to juggle the new online platforms, emails, schedules and such that remote learning asks of them. We feel that the time will be right on April 20th to take a pause after one solid month of remote school. To offer students and parents a week away from the demand of schooling will hopefully allow your family to relax and recharge. From the many parents who are still working, we have heard that April vacation will be a welcomed week ahead to have a break from the school schedule. It goes without saying that there are many students who have found this new way of remote learning

to be intensive and they have made the efforts to dig right in. We know those students may be looking forward to a week in which RSU 22 clicks the pause button.

It is important for you to know that RSU 22 will continue to grade student 4th quarter work at Reeds Brook Middle School, Wagner Middle School and at Hampden Academy. The grading is meant to be a means of effective feedback to and incentive for students to continue working toward completion of remote and online assignments. Please know that we are approaching grading as an engagement strategy and we recognize there are individual situations that warrant us giving special considerations. We also recognize instruction is different and our grading methods will adapt. First and foremost supporting students is our goal and we are seeking to do so in every way we can think of from check-ins to helplines and tutorials to Google Hangout classes. We are preparing for students who may need extra support as we end the school year or in the fall. I want to emphasize that students in good standing will move to the next grade level for the 2020-21 school year as would normally be the case.

McGraw School, Smith School and Weatherbee School parents will receive feedback sheets that will detail the areas in which elementary students were offered learning experiences and activities. We recognize that students at our elementary schools are not turning in work in a regular fashion or to the degree of secondary schools yet we feel it is important to offer parents information about the learning opportunities afforded your child(ren). Expect the feedback sheets toward the end of Quarter 4.

There is a “snow day” being predicted for this Thursday night into Friday April 10th. Therefore, we will be delivering two meals on Thursday so as not to miss delivery on a snowy Friday morning. Even if the forecast changes, we have planned for Thursday delivery only.

In the last letter I mentioned that our school nutrition program was preparing to offer the bulk meal delivery service being authorized by the Department of Education School Nutrition Program. I am pleased to share that this program will be implemented starting next Monday April 13th. Please expect that for our first delivery cycle will include three breakfast and three lunch meals **per child** delivered on Monday the 13th. Seven meals per child will be delivered on Thursday the 16th. The delivery on April 16th will provide **7 meals each** for breakfast and lunch for the duration of school vacation. We will only deliver two times next week. Bus timings will likely change next week as we adjust.

Some details to know related to meal delivery are that RSU 22 is bound by federal regulations and menu requirements. On a 7-meal delivery day, families should expect a gallon of milk, several small breakfast cereal bowl packets, juices and many individual lunch items. We are not authorized to send a family sized box of cereal or jar of peanut butter because all items must be measured by student unit. Families with multiple children could expect at least two gallons of milk will be delivered. We thought you would like to know in anticipation of needing storage in your refrigerators.

Now back to the school based information! Have you had a chance to check out your school’s Facebook page? Our school staff and administration have been working to keep you updated on school events, have been posting inspirational videos to remind students we miss them and have been working to share instructional or helpful learning opportunities. If you or your child is having a day in which the remote learning just isn’t hitting the mark, I encourage you to visit your school’s Facebook page for a smile!

Our RSU 22 Board of Directors has a Facebook page, too. We post our Board meeting and committee meeting dates along with the new Google Meet web addresses so the public can join in with us. If you are interested please visit our RSU 22 website or the RSU 22 Board of Directors Facebook page for information.

Speaking of information, RSU 22 has also just released its new district app! To download the app, visit the Apple App Store or Google Play and search for RSU 22 (leave a space between the RSU and 22). The app now features one stop shopping for information from all of our schools, services, school board and more. We hope you find this app a convenient and helpful addition to our set of communication tools.

I would like to close with a reminder that resources are available in our communities on a number of fronts. Please, if you are concerned with how your child is doing emotionally you can contact the NAMI MAINE HELPLINE. Their number is 800-464-5767, press 1.

Here is a link to the Department of Health and Human Resources Hotline page <https://www.maine.gov/dhhs/hotlines.shtml> Their direct line is (207) 287-3703.

You can also use the number 2-1-1 to get general information regarding the Coronavirus outbreak in Maine.

For more information related to resources in our communities, you may call the following:

Winterport Town Office at 223-5055

Frankfort Town Office at 223-5546

Newburgh Town Office at 234-4151

Hampden Public Safety 862-8364 Monday-Friday 8:00 a.m.-12:00 p.m.

RSU 22 School Work Help Line 200-1352 9:00 a.m. – 9:00 p.m. Monday-Friday

RSU 22 Technology Help Line 200-3128 3:00-9:00 p.m. Monday-Thursday 2:00-6:00 p.m. Friday

We continue to be so appreciative of the parent support throughout our communities as we try new things and seek to educate from afar. Just remember it's all about the balance. School is important but so are many other things! We hope you know that we are here to support your child's well being, the time for play, the time for creativity and the time for connection. As they say, "*Life is a balance of holding on, letting go and knowing when to do which of the two.*" Please let us know how to serve you and your child best.

Sincerely,
Regan Nickels

Regan Nickels
Assistant Superintendent of Business and Operations <mailto:rnickels@rsu22.us>