

Regional School Unit 83
Maine School Administrative District No. 13
P.O. Box 649, Bingham, Maine 04920

Superintendent's Office
(207) 672-5502
Fax: (207) 672-3800

Moscow Elementary School
Grade Pre-K-4
(207) 672-5572

Valley Jr./Sr. High School
Grades 5-8 & 9-12
672-3300

November 24, 2020

Dear Students, Parents, Staff and Community Members;

Yesterday afternoon, Nov 23rd I was contacted by a Central Maine Newspaper reporter regarding the COVID 19 outbreak at Valley. I shared with the reporter that I had not been informed by CDC that Valley's COVID 19 cases constituted an outbreak. I then spoke to the Department of Education to see if they were aware that MSAD 13's cases at Valley had been classified as an outbreak. The DOE reached out to CDC on our behalf and I received a phone call from CDC informing me that Valley was listed as an outbreak but that the outbreak is scheduled to be closed Nov 27th. I requested a meeting with CDC and DOE for today.

The CDC confirmed today that the outbreak at Valley began on Nov 10th and was based on the 8 cases that occurred between Nov 10th and Nov 17th. CDC's definition of an outbreak is 3 or more cases within a 14 day period.

CDC stated that our decision to move grades 5-12 to remote learning was a correct decision. CDC is encouraging schools to not disrupt the lives of students and staff who are not actual close contacts when possible. We were told that our protocols are appropriate and that transmission of COVID 19 is occurring in the communities and being brought into our schools. CDC went on to say that by following the Standard Operating Procedures(SOP) MSAD 13 had prevent a larger outbreak occurring at Valley. They went on to say that the district had handled the cases very appropriately and that is why there was no spread within our school. All our cases were due to community transmission.

Our schools are here for our students. This year will continue to be challenging, our goal is to keep our schools open for in-person instruction for our students. For in person learning to continue to occur, the Board continues providing support to our staff. The board decided to provide two additional workshop and planning days for staff on Dec 21st and 22nd. Students will not attend school on these days either in person or remotely. The additional time is necessary for the staff to continue preparing lessons for in person and remote learning. Allowing staff this additional time will benefit our students and their learning. We recognize that workshop time is a burden to our families, but we ask for your understanding.

Somerset County is experiencing its highest number of cases since the pandemic began in March 2020. Maine CDC has announced that Somerset County's infection rate is the third highest in Maine at 24.4, and its positivity rates remain the highest of any county at 4.7 percent. Over the last 30 days, the new case rate in Maine schools, including both students and staff, was 8.8 cases per 10,000, compared to 19.9 cases per 10,000 in Maine overall. This indicates that school settings, where masking and social distancing practices are strictly adhered to, are safer than other community settings.

If you want to keep our schools operating in person for our students then we need you to do your part. There are things that you can do in your community that will help keep our schools operating in person. CDC and DOE have stated that one of the biggest things we can all do is to wear our masks and remain socially

distanced from people we don't live with. The number of cases in our school shows that the virus has a hard time spreading when we wear our masks and social distance.

So please help us keep our students in person in our schools. Wear your mask, social distance and avoid unnecessary gatherings. We can do this but only if you help us.

I will continue to update you as I receive new information. Happy Thanksgiving to all. Please stay safe and healthy.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Sandra J. MacArthur". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized initial 'S'.

Sandra J MacArthur
Superintendent MSAD 13