

MT. BLUE REGIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICT

CHESTERVILLE – FARMINGTON – INDUSTRY – NEW SHARON – NEW VINEYARD – STARKS – TEMPLE – VIENNA – WELD – WILTON

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TO: RSU 9 Parents and Guardians

FROM: Christian M. Elkington

RE: Two Important Updates!

DATE: 3-28-2024

Can you say Eclipse? - Over the last six weeks there have been countless discussions in Maine school districts about concerns for student safety during the upcoming Eclipse, which in our area will take place on Monday, April 8th somewhere between 3:20 – 3:40 pm. For RSU 9 these discussions center around the PM Bus run for grades PreK - Grade 5, which starts around 3:15 pm.

RSU 9 is looking at this as a teachable moment with staff working with students to help them understand what is happening and what they will need to do to safely experience the Eclipse. We have purchased ALL students protective glasses and will be sharing information with parents in the next couple of days. However, concerns remain about students being on buses during that time and bus drivers being able to manage both student excitement and ensuring the glasses are being worn.

In addition to the above concerns, Franklin County Emergency Management Officials, along with local PD, Fire, Ambulance, and Franklin Memorial Hospital staff are also worried about the potential for added problems that may be caused by an expected increase in traffic. If because of the Eclipse, this occurs it will likely make getting around our area difficult that day, especially between 2 to 4 pm. No one knows for sure what traffic will be like because of visitors and what that could do to drop-off times. **So, because of the potential for health, safety, and traffic concerns we, like many districts in our area and around our state, need to make Monday, April 8th an Early Release Day. Grades 6-12 students will be dismissed at 11:30 AM, followed by Grades PreK – 5 students being dismissed at 12:30 PM.**

Please believe me when I say that we understand the inconvenience this can cause for many families but unfortunately, we do not see any alternative which prioritizes the health and safety of our students. Thank you for your understanding.

The forecast for tonight and tomorrow – has in it the potential for a large amount of rain. That along with snow melt could cause some flooding on our streams and rivers. As we have seen over the last year you can never tell what might happen. If needed, we will communicate with Franklin County Emergency Management along with other local safety officials to see if any concerns may arise that could cause us to need to make a change in our school day. I share this not to worry anyone or for anyone to assume that I will be making a change in the day, but simply to let you know we are watching the situation closely as student and staff safety is our # 1 concern and as we all know you can never be too proactive around safety!

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