

# MT. BLUE REGIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICT

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*“Public Schools not only serve the public, they make the public.”*

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TO: RSU 9 Parents and Guardians  
FROM: Christian M. Elkington, Superintendent  
RE: Contact Tracing, Quarantining/Instruction During Quarantining and COVID Funds  
DATE: 9-21-2021

Many questions and concerns have come up from parents as the number of quarantined students in RSU 9 has increased dramatically over the last four school days. We have spoken with or responded to parents who have contacted us with many important questions regarding contact tracing, quarantining and instruction during quarantining. The answers to these questions need to be shared with everyone and so by this evening (Tuesday, 9/21) a Frequently Asked Questions document will be shared with you. And, to further increase communication, we will also be hosting two ZOOM meetings to directly answer any new questions and to explain any information already shared. The dates, times and links for these meetings are included below:

Wednesday, 9/22 at 5:30pm	<a href="https://us02web.zoom.us/j/81937753791?pwd=U2ZmOGdTcjRMRkF5bUI5L3pUQWkrdz09">https://us02web.zoom.us/j/81937753791?pwd=U2ZmOGdTcjRMRkF5bUI5L3pUQWkrdz09</a>
Monday, 9/27 at 6:00pm	<a href="https://us02web.zoom.us/j/87242152238?pwd=VWI2dnNjYIRIVIVodnJ5cncvU3VHZz09">https://us02web.zoom.us/j/87242152238?pwd=VWI2dnNjYIRIVIVodnJ5cncvU3VHZz09</a>

## **Background on instruction during quarantine -**

In planning for students quarantining, we looked at the success/difficulties of the instructional model used last year in RSU 9 and in other districts where synchronous instruction was received by students both in the classroom and at home via ZOOM. Our administrative team, our teaching staff and school districts around us felt that the dual model was not very successful for many of our students. Some of the problems cited include:

- Internet connection problems for many of our remote learners.
- Attendance concerns and the lack of engagement of many remote learners.
- The difficulty many students in all grades, both in school and learning remotely, had focusing during these sessions.
- The difficulties in teaching both groups at the same time and having to split attention between those in the classroom and those on ZOOM lessened the effectiveness of instruction.

Because of the above, it was felt that students and staff would be more successful if we followed the plan we regularly use when a student is out for an extended illness such as a bad case of the flu, an extended vacation or if they were in the hospital for a short stay. That is why our [2021-2022 Return to School Handbook](#), says the following on page 5:

### **Home-Based Learning**

“Just like when students are hospitalized or have a bad case of the flu etc. during non-COVID times students may be out for several reasons during the school year including having COVID or quarantining. If that is the case teachers will supply work as they have in similar situations before COVID previously by using Google Classroom

(6-12), Seesaw (K-5), or through paper packets sent home. Teachers will keep in communication with students and families as instructional needs warrant it. Families should continue to reach out to teachers for any questions they may have. A teacher who feels most comfortable with synchronous learning may invite a student into the classroom, but only if the student's internet connection is strong and there is a mutual agreement between home and school, with principal approval.”

It is now obvious through the contact tracing process that student quarantines will, at least for the short term, happen much more frequently than we had originally thought. We understand the real concerns parents are sharing about the potential for repeated quarantining and the impact on student learning. We are looking at what can be done to provide our students with the best instruction possible under these conditions. We are also looking at trying to improve what we currently have available for after school supports which quarantined students and their parents could take advantage of for added instructional assistance. While our during the school day staffing needs remain a problem that is not easily fixed, we must see what else we might be able to offer to students who are quarantined.

Please join us for one of these upcoming ZOOM meetings.