

Neshobe Elementary moves to remote learning

12-17-2021, Rutland Herald, by Jim Sabataseo

BRANDON — Neshobe Elementary School has moved to remote learning as a consequence of COVID-19, according to school officials.

“Since we are not able to get ahead of the positive cases, we have made the very difficult decision to go to distance learning starting tomorrow (Friday, Dec. 17) until the December break,” read a statement posted to the school's website on Thursday evening.

Jeanne Collins, superintendent of Rutland Northeast Supervisory Union, called the move a “last choice option.”

She cited two main factors that necessitated the closure.

One was a cluster of positive cases that affected a number of grade levels and sent at least six classes into quarantine.

She noted the number of cases appeared to indicate that the virus was spreading within the school.

“It really felt like we needed to stop the spread and stop it from spreading to other grade levels,” she said.

Another factor was a shortage of staff.

Collins reported that Neshobe had 22 staff absences in a single day earlier this week and not enough substitutes to fill in.

“For consistency of education, it made sense to move to distance learning so that all kids would be able to complete these next four days,” she said.

She added that it has been difficult to implement the state's Test to Stay program at Neshobe when more than two classes are impacted, citing a lack of staff capacity.

Collins encouraged parents to make sure their children are vaccinated if eligible.

Neshobe isn't the only school in the state forced to close because of a large number of COVID cases.

On Friday, WCAX reported that all five schools in Franklin County's Maple Run Unified School District were closed until at least Monday.

“We need to be transparent with our community that the level of COVID-19 cases we are experiencing makes it impossible to provide students with a safe and supported education,” Superintendent Bill Kimball stated in a letter to families, citing similar staffing issues and an inability to deliver Test to Stay.

On Friday, the state reported 460 new cases of COVID-19 and 60 hospitalizations, including 19 in intensive care. The death toll is 451. As of Dec. 13, 258 new cases of COVID had been recorded in K-12 schools in the previous seven days for a total of 2,749 cases since the start of the current school year.