

Greenwich Public Schools: Coronavirus Update March 8, 2020

Good Evening GPS Families,

We want to continue our open and transparent communication as we are constantly monitoring the situation as changes occur in and around Connecticut. We understand the level of concern given the proximity of where positive cases of the virus occurred this past weekend.

What are we doing to be proactive?

GPS continues to monitor the situation on a daily basis, taking guidance from Greenwich's Health Department, the CT State Department of Health and Center for Disease Control. Ultimately, our local Greenwich health authorities are the guiding beacon if the Governor has not declared a State of Emergency for Connecticut.

Facilities and Cleaning:

In GPS we are conducting nightly deep cleaning utilizing strong, yet safe disinfectants on all high touch points. We have extended hours in the evening when the building is empty to make sure that the building is thoroughly deep cleaned every night, following protocol which is often utilized during flu season to minimize the spread of germs.

GPS follows Connecticut standards for approved cleaners, so it is important that staff and families allow the school district to provide the cleaning products. Some products from home, which are not approved, can cause allergic reactions and other health-related challenges for students and staff.

Out of State Field Trips:

Beginning Monday, March 9th, all GPS out-of-state field trips/travel are suspended until further notice. During the week of March 16th-20th there were three different groups traveling to NYC, and given the current State of Emergency declared in New York, it would be unwise to continue those trips unless something changes in the next 7 days, which is highly unlikely. Schools will communicate directly with students and families over the coming weeks on trip cancellations and rescheduling.

There are many GPS trips planned for late April and May. We will remain optimistic that the level of concern has waned by that time, and the suspension of trips can be halted. We are working with travel vendors who are dealing with this issue across the country. Right now, health officials expect warmer weather to significantly slow the spread of the virus and assist to restore some normalcy in late spring.

Health Monitoring:

If you have a child who is immune compromised, please work with your School Principal and/or School Nurse for any necessary accommodations. Absences in this instance are excused and the school will work with families to provide as much learning as possible to keep the student on pace with his or her classmates.

Extended School Closures:

Extended closures are governed by a State of Emergency declared by the Governor. An extended closure would warrant a different approach to learning, and out of an abundance of caution, GPS is preparing for such an event. Alternate learning pathways would be provided for home, and in the event of an extended event, food service for those children on free and reduced meals would also be provided.

If one school site should experience a challenging situation, GPS may choose to close one school for a deeper cleaning for a period of time, just as we do during flu season. This decision would be made by working closely with the Department of Health.

Additionally, staff do not determine a COVID-19 diagnosis. Those tasks are the responsibility of state and local health departments, which have liaisons who will work with school districts as cases arise.

What you can do to help?

Encourage your student(s) to carry his or her device home each evening.

If there is another device available at home, be sure that your student can access the same programs he or she can access at school. This scenario is easier with Chromebooks than in grades 2nd-5th with their use of iPads where some Apps are specific to school use.

We will be sending a separate instructional update later in the week with more detail for families as we proactively plan for an extended closure, which we hope doesn't happen.

Do you have Internet at home?

Please let your School Principal, Teacher, or School Counselor know if you do not have home internet access. There is a special program in GPS which provides internet hotspots free of charge for homes without access. One hotspot works for multiple students within one family. This is an existing program, and is not a unique resource because of the Coronavirus. We remain committed to equity and access for all of our students.

Facility Rentals:

After hours facility usage will be reduced beginning the week of March 9th to provide more time for the custodial staff to deep clean without interruption. At this time, there has been no adjustments from the state on athletic events. However, this could change at any time.

Communications:

We understand that this is a concerning time where misinformation is likely to spread quickly through social media. We ask that should you have concerns or questions, please go to a source that is directly connected to your question and can accurately provide you with a response. Information from the Office of the Superintendent is as

accurate and up-to-date as the minute we hit send. We are committed to communicating often with you so that we all stay well informed.

This is an unsettling time given the access to social media, news stories, and constant barrage of information which can be frightening, especially for children and young people. Thank you for supporting our staff as they work to keep a sense of normalcy and calm for our students.

Thank you,
Dr. Toni Jones
Superintendent, Greenwich Public Schools