

Greenwich Public Schools: Coronavirus Update, March 10, 2020

GPS Families,

As promised, we are working hard to keep you as informed as possible as we navigate this challenging circumstance with the Coronavirus. Please find below more information so that our community has the most up-to-date, factual information.

Cancellation of Events Greater than 100 People:

The Governor held a phone conference for all state and local leaders at 5:00pm on Monday afternoon, March 9th, and requested that all events which include more than 100 people be cancelled or rescheduled. This request was made on the basis of learning from other communities who have gone through this challenge in the previous weeks. Being proactive in stopping large gatherings is deemed the appropriate thing to do in order to limit personal contact and transfer of the virus to others. GPS is working to be thoughtful when determining cancellations of large gatherings as it's a delicate balance of taking precautionary measures while maintaining a sense of normalcy for our staff and students.

GPS is in the process of cancelling numerous events across the district from facility rentals to fundraisers which were to occur this week and next week. We thank everybody in advance for their patience, as we know these cancellations are disappointing.

Today at 3:00 pm, the Governor stated he was going to sign a Declaration of Civil Preparedness and Public Health Emergency. Based on this latest development, we will continue to monitor the situation to gain a better understanding of what this may mean for our public schools.

Athletic Events:

We received word today that the Connecticut Interscholastic Athletic Conference (CIAC) has canceled all remaining winter tournament games, out of an abundance of caution. Our heart goes out to our GHS student athletes and coaching staff of Girls Basketball, Boys Ice Hockey, Girls Ice Hockey, and Boys Swimming who were all state championship contenders. While Girls Ice Hockey plays in a different conference, their conference also voted to align with the difficult decision made by the CIAC. Congratulations to our teams on what has been an outstanding Winter Sport season.

Facilities and Cleaning Products:

As a reminder, our Facilities Team continues to be proactive about cleaning our high-touch areas (door knobs, sinks, etc.), including the use of additional hours to deep clean our buildings to further prevent the spread of germs; buses are wiped down daily; and staff continuously remind students to wash their hands. Student desks are being wiped down each evening.

What are we using to properly clean?

Our buildings are being disinfected every day. All student desks and high touch areas are being wiped down with Oxivir Wipes which are for institutional use only. The product is highly effective. In addition, GPS is utilizing VIREX II as a dilutable cleaner. Our products are supported by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) as “registered antimicrobial products for use against Novel Coronavirus SARS-CoV-2, the Cause of COVID-19” (EPA Guidance, issued 3/3/2020). The products are safe for use in our schools and are approved disinfectants.

Our entire custodial staff is to be commended for the many hours they are spending on a daily basis to make sure that our buildings are thoroughly disinfected and ready for students and teachers.

Instruction and Preparing for School Closures:

Our District has a pre-planned early release day on Wednesday, March 11, for Staff Professional Development, which we are utilizing as a preparation session for all teachers and staff to plan for potential distance learning needs. We know many schools in our area have closed schools for a day or enforced delayed openings/early release to plan for potential distance learning, but we feel very fortunate of our ongoing planning and previously scheduled early release day to prepare without disruption to our students.

Per the guidance provided as of late Monday afternoon (March 9th) by the Connecticut State Department of Education, should we be instructed or choose to close schools and want to pursue distance learning, we need to apply for a waiver to the State. We are in the process of preparing for this type of application, should we need to pursue it. Last week, their guidance did not require requesting a waiver. Many of our families have asked about distance or digital learning, so we want you to understand why the pathway forward is still in development in terms of what the state will or will not allow, as of today.

What would distance learning look like?

Distance learning would look different than traditional classroom learning. Families could anticipate 180-190 minutes of planned activity for K-5, and content-specific activities from each of the classes enrolled from 6th-12th grade teachers. It would be important to provide our teachers time within each day for planning, responding to students and families, and working remotely with colleagues to share ideas and plans.

In elementary, adult assistance would be needed to guide the student. However, there are digital platforms that would be utilized to provide 20 minutes of independent mathematics or literacy, along with non-digital activities like word study, reading, drawing, and writing. A child’s teacher would be preparing the materials so children would be familiar with what they are being asked to do. A schedule would be available that would be easy for a parent to see how much time should be spent on an activity, and a recommended sequence of activities for their children. Teachers would remain

online and available during their usual teacher hours. The next day's information would be posted on or around 3:00pm for all families.

A technical helpline would remain open and staffed to answer questions and to assist families and students who are having technical difficulty with their device, logging on, or have general questions about digital applications.

How do we plan for activities like ACT/SAT Testing, Graduation, Prom, and Big Events?

GHS was not scheduled to host an SAT session in March. Any cancellations would be the decision of the testing site where our GHS students are registered.

A school closure of any length could impact our graduation date; however it is important to note, that the impact of scheduling would be similar to a year where the district experienced numerous snow day outages, which would require us to be in school late until June.

We are evaluating our current status one day and one week at a time. There are not expected cancellations of events for April, May, or June at this time.

How can I make sure that my child's iPad or Chromebook is disinfected?

Using a 70 percent isopropyl alcohol wipe or Clorox Disinfecting Wipes, you may gently wipe the hard, nonporous surfaces of your Apple product, such as the display, keyboard, or other exterior surfaces. Don't use bleach. Avoid getting moisture in any opening, and don't submerge your Apple product in any cleaning agents.

This article about [cleaning your Apple products](#), specifies that the use of Clorox Disinfecting Wipes is allowed. Clorox Disinfecting Wipes are also on the EPA's list of products that "have qualified for use against the coronavirus." At this point, we can recommend these wipes for cleaning iPads as well as for cleaning the hard, nonporous surfaces of computer equipment such as the display, keyboard, or other exterior surfaces.

I know that this is a great deal of information, but I want to provide our GPS community with as much detail as possible. We are continuing to monitor this situation on an ongoing basis. We have wonderful teachers and staff who are keeping our buildings buzzing with learning and working hard to provide a sense of normalcy for our students. We will continue to update families frequently, and with as much detail as possible.

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