

Greenwich Public Schools: District Closure

March 11, 2020

Dear GPS Families,

As of this afternoon, Greenwich **does not** have a confirmed case of the Coronavirus. However, as we grapple with this challenging situation we do believe it is in the best interest of students, staff, and our families to act responsibly, and therefore out of an abundance of caution, all Greenwich Public Schools will **close beginning tomorrow, Thursday, March 12th, 2020**. In partnership with our local health officials, we believe this is the appropriate action.

[According to the Center for Disease Control](#), “Community mitigation is a set of actions that persons and communities can take to help slow the spread of respiratory virus infections. Community mitigation is especially important before a vaccine or drug becomes widely available.” Our local health officials also shared that although cases are not yet in our direct community, there is still cause for concern with the growing number of cases given our proximity to affected areas in NY and Southwestern CT.

We will remain closed through next week as we continue to evaluate our circumstances. Families should plan for a longer closure, but we will continue to keep you updated of our status in Greenwich. With schools being closed, all after school programs will be canceled. There will be no bus service for in district and out of district for the next two days.

Cleaning Supplies

Early this morning we learned that the cleaning suppliers “had to make the very difficult decision to limit the selling of sanitizers, disinfectants, personal protection wear, disinfecting wipes to only healthcare facilities. These include hospitals, convalescent homes and walk-in clinics,” (Email notification, March 11, 2020). While we have supplies that will last for several days, we do not want our supplies completely depleted. As you can imagine, school absolutely cannot be in session if we cannot deep clean our buildings every evening.

Staff Considerations

In addition, in order to keep our buildings open, we must have staff to maintain them, and many of our teachers have children in districts which are closing or have closed. In addition, we have staff members who are pregnant, have compromised immune systems from cancer treatments, live with aging parents and newborn babies, in addition to other concerns which require the same level of protection and concern as our business community, of which many businesses have imposed limited personal contact and have asked people to work from home.

Distance/Digital Learning

GPS submitted a waiver request to the Connecticut Department of Education this afternoon to approve distance learning for our staff and students. Tomorrow (Thursday, March 12) and Friday (March 13) **will not** be digital learning days. These are similar to “snow days” and will need to be made up in our calendar if the state does not provide a waiver to our 180 days of mandatory instructional days. We hope to have an update for staff and our community about our approach next week as we wait on state approval. If distance/digital learning is approved we will be issuing a detailed and comprehensive guide for families to understand the process and how to gain access with ease. All of these materials have been created and reviewed by our GPS staff. We are ready to provide these resources for our students, we just need approval.

Parents of K-1 students will have an opportunity to pick up iPads from the schools on Friday to ensure access to the abundance of digital reading material and applications available for our youngest learners. We will provide more information tomorrow afternoon for families in regards to pick up times. Again, there will also be more details to follow about distance learning or make-up days.

This decision was not made lightly. With the closures of various neighboring school districts, the concern we are hearing from members of our school community, and the growing numbers of cases, we think this is the right decision for our students and staff.

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