



# SUFFIELD PUBLIC SCHOOLS

## *Office of the Superintendent*

*Timothy M. Van Tassel*  
Superintendent

*Laura Guerrette*  
Executive Secretary

March 12, 2020

Dear Parents/Guardians:

As you are aware, the Town of Suffield and the Suffield Public Schools continue to receive information from government agencies regarding COVID-19. While multiple tests have been conducted within the past week, the Department of Public Health has confirmed that only three known cases exist within the State of Connecticut. We remain very hopeful that the proactive measures we have taken in Suffield will serve to prevent or mitigate a community spread within our school district.

On Wednesday, March 11, 2020, the Governor set forth a declaration of Public Health and Civil Preparedness Emergency. The underlying purpose of this declaration is to enable state and local government agencies to take the necessary steps to protect public health and safety. In addition to this declaration, special guidance regarding recommended practices has been provided to prevent the spread of the virus within communities. Here is a list of the recommendations we have received this far:

- An immediate freeze on state employee travel for state business outside of Connecticut until further notice;
- Any State of Connecticut-organized large meetings, conferences, or gatherings anticipated to have more than 100 people in attendance will be evaluated as to whether these events should move to teleconference or be postponed;
- For events or meetings with large numbers of people within arm's length of each other, encourage those who are at higher risk due to age (70 or older), cardiovascular disease, diabetes, cancer, heart disease, or chronic lung diseases like COPD, as well as, those with severely weakened immune systems, not to attend or dial in.

As a result of these recommendations, the Board of Education held an Emergency Meeting on Tuesday, March 10, 2020 to discuss the district's preparedness and response to the guidance we have received from state agencies. In our efforts to safeguard our students, staff, and community, we will be postponing or canceling the following events, **beginning March 12, 2020 at 9:00 am**, until further notice:

- School and evening events and assemblies with anticipated attendance greater than 100 people;
- Field trips outside of Connecticut, as well as, in-state events where the attendance would include multi-district representation.

At this time, I am going to strongly encourage families to make preparations for both short and long-term school closures. Important to note, no decisions have been made regarding this occurring in Suffield. However, we continue to monitor the ever-changing status of the

community-spread in Connecticut and we will make our decisions as will be required. With the approval of the State Board of Education, the Suffield Board of Education may be granted the authority to waive school days in the event of significant losses of instructional time. We will be submitting a waiver to this effect in hopes of it being approved. Our district faculty have done a tremendous amount of work in preparing distance-learning materials for all students, and this may serve to support our request for a waiver from the Connecticut State Department of Education. We will update the community if we receive formal approval.

We are very disappointed that the difficult decision to cancel much anticipated events had to occur; however, it is important that we do all that we can to protect our community from the spread of this virus. We understand the disappointment that these cancellations will have with our students and families; however, we are hopeful that you understand the position we are in and our need to follow the guidance that we have been provided. We will continue to monitor the situation to inform our decisions moving forward. As noted by an expert on infectious disease, “aggressive containment and mitigation efforts” are our best hope to lessen the spread of this virus (Fauci, 2020). The well-being and safety of our entire community is dependent on our collective efforts, and I greatly appreciate your support with this.

Sincerely,



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