



12 March 2020

Dear Avon Public School Families:

As you most likely know, Connecticut Governor Lamont declared a public health emergency and a civic preparedness emergency related to the spread of COVID-19 coronavirus. After participating in another conference call today with the State Department of Education, communications with the Department of Public Health, and continued communications with both area superintendents and legal counsel, we have made the difficult decision to close our schools, starting Monday, March 16, 2020 to aid in the in “slowing of transmission” of the COVID-19 virus. Avon Public Schools will be following the typical recommendation of closing its schools for two (2) weeks beginning, Monday, March 16th and ending Sunday, March 29, 2020. For the efforts to be effective, we have been asked to advise our community that during this two week period you follow the advice of the Centers for Disease Control which defines social distancing as “remaining out of congregate settings, avoiding mass gatherings and maintaining distance (approximately 6 feet) from others when possible.” Likewise, as I stated previously, we still ask that you notify us if you have traveled to an area of known risk (check the <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/home/index.html> website for continual updates).

This afternoon, Governor Lamont issued an executive order to waive the 180 day school year for all school districts; however, on the conference call this evening with the Commissioner of Education, it was clarified that we may still be required to make up as many missed days in June as we can (until June 30), unless we have a state-approved waiver for “distance learning.” As I mentioned in my previous letter, our teams have put together supplemental work (that you will be able to find on our website next week) for our students in grades K-12 to keep them connected to school during the closure. That said, there are considerations to be made related to providing students with special needs related services and so as I stated previously, the work being provided is considered “supplemental.” If at a later time, we are able to ensure we are able to meet all the State’s requirements, we could potentially apply for a waiver. I explain this just because I believe what was heard in the Governor’s press conference left us with a different impression. We will cross this bridge when we come to it, as I do not have all of the answers, even from the State right now. In the meantime, know that you will receive more notification next week about accessing the online activities.

As we all know, this is a continually evolving situation, and so we will continue to be in contact with the Connecticut State Department of Education, Connecticut State Department of Health, and the Farmington Valley Health District over the next two weeks; therefore, if a recommendation is made to remain closed longer than two weeks, we would communicate that with you at a later time. Obviously, we are hoping this will not be the case.

Avon Public Schools
Dr. Bridget Heston Carnemolla
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Again, this is a difficult decision, but one that is made to do what we can to protect the health of our students, staff, and community. I am mindful that there is much debate over what has turned into a media frenzy, and I share that frustration. That said, we are doing the best we can in what has turned into an unprecedented situation for all of us. Still, I am hopeful that we can talk with our students and children in a way that does not promote more panic, but instead an understanding that we sometimes move with what life brings us and make the best-informed choices we can at the time.

Allowing staff and students to attend school tomorrow will ensure that we can finish our week, gather our things, and prepare for the closure. Likewise, I am sending this to you tonight instead of tomorrow so that you have at least some time to make any arrangements you may need to make for childcare and so on (which I certainly understand). Of course, the same advice we have been getting all along stands: if you are sick, stay home. And while you are with us (or anywhere), adhere to the universal precautions of hand-washing, covering coughs/sneezes, and keeping distance from those who are sick.

Again, I have attached a resource that you may find helpful in discussing this with your children.

Thank you for your continued support and cooperation: it is much appreciated.

Sincerely,

Bridget H. Carnemolla

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Superintendent of Avon Public Schools

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