



ANSONIA PUBLIC SCHOOLS
OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDENT

March 13, 2020

Dear Ansonia Families,

I am writing this letter to you to let you know about an unprecedented action that school leaders are taking in order to halt the transmission of the COVID-19 virus. Along with other Valley schools and districts throughout the state, we will be closing our schools starting today through Friday, March 27.

I did not make this decision without a great deal of consultation with state and local leaders and health officials. **As I write this letter, there are still NO CONFIRMED CASES of COVID-19 in Ansonia or the Valley region.** However, during a series of conference calls last night, it was strongly recommended that we close our schools for an extended period of time in order to halt the spread of the virus.

Here are the steps we are taking:

- Today, our teaching staff reported to work to prepare learning packets for every student in our district.
- On Monday, March 16 and Tuesday, March 17, our schools will be open for parents to pick up the learning packets for their children, as well as any personal items and medications for their children. In addition to the packets, "grab and go" meal packets will be available for our parents to take for their child. The hours that the meals will be available are Noon-6 p.m., which we hope will accommodate the working hours for most of our families.
- We will continue to meet or speak with the Valley Health Department and other state and local leaders in order to assess the status of COVID-19 cases and when we can re-open our schools. Our current plan is to remain closed through March 27; however, please be aware that the reopening of our schools will be based on the recommendation of the state and Valley Health Department officials.
- Finally, for the parents of children who attend out of district schools, please know that your children will continue to be transported to those schools as long as they remain open.

DR. JOSEPH DiBACCO
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The School Year and Education

The Governor announced yesterday that he is waiving the requirement that all students attend school for 180 days. However, that comes with a significant caveat: Any cancelled days must be made up in June and/or during the April break. Any district that hasn't completed 180 days of school by June 30, 2020, will not be punished. **Please know that at this time, the decision has not been made about the April break.**

I also want to clarify where things stand with respect to remote learning. We have been hoping for the best, but preparing for the worst. There are other districts in the state that have had remote learning in place for years. Ansonia is not one of those districts. We know we have families who do not have access to technology at home. That is why we are preparing paper packets for every student in our district. For those who have the technology at home, we welcome them to supplement their learning by using the free online learning programs that are available via our website, www.ansoniam.org.

To reiterate: The days that we are closed due to the Covid-19 pandemic will be added to our school year calendar as make-up days.

Why Schools are Being Closed

Yesterday, the Governor held a press conference where he issued new guidance on the COVID-19 virus. Late in the day, I participated in a superintendent's conference call conducted by the Commissioner of Education, his top staff, and the State Epidemiologist. During this conference call, districts were told to follow the recommendations of health officials. The State Epidemiologist recommended that students remain home during this time to stop the spread of this virus. Naugatuck Valley Health District has provided continuous support and has informed us that there are no confirmed cases of COVID-19 in the Valley to date, however, out of an abundance of caution, we will follow the recommendation to close schools for an extended period.

We are taking these steps in order to protect our students and staff. The State of Connecticut and Naugatuck Valley Health District have emphasized that the community only engage in essential functions during this window. They have strongly discouraged community gatherings. They have also recommended that people continue to follow all relevant guidance issued by the Centers for Disease Control (CDC).

Finally, I would like to apologize for the inconvenience of having to send out such a late notification last night that we were closing school today. Once I realized that we would need to close our district for two weeks, I knew we needed to give our teachers the time to prepare learning packets for your children.

These are unprecedented times for the state and our Ansonia community. The information that has been shared is concerning and very real. I truly thank you for your understanding and patience during this difficult time. We will be providing updates to you as needed, as this is a rapidly changing situation. We will work through this together; we are Ansonia Strong.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Dr. Joseph DiBacco". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Dr. Joseph DiBacco
Superintendent of Schools