

Dear Parents:

I wanted to provide you an update on the school's preparation and how we plan to move forward while dealing with the COVID-19 situation especially for international students. I have heard from several parents with questions about local conditions and about the possibility of students returning to China. We recognize and hear your concerns regarding your child remaining in the United States.

Here are some important things to know:

- No student, parent, or employee of Wardlaw+Hartridge has tested positive for COVID-19.
- Within Edison's population of 103,000, only 10 residents have tested positive, though of course that number may increase over time.
- The Governor of New Jersey has ordered all schools to close for in-person classes until further notice. We have announced that all classes will be conducted as distance learning until it is determined that conditions are safe to resume in-person classes. We do not know how long that will be.
- New York State has closed all non-essential businesses, so most New Jersey residents do not commute to the city and become exposed to the virus in that way. Today, New Jersey announced a similar action. This is all responsible policy to suppress the virus and it helps ensure our students' health.
- All of our families have been reminded about best practices in hygiene and social distancing as we join the effort across the state to suppress the spread of the coronavirus.
- We have access to excellent medical professionals and hospitals in the area, including hospitals in Edison, New Brunswick, Summit, and Morristown. If your child is not feeling well, they should advise their homestay/guardian, their agency (if they have one) and me immediately.
- Students who are sick with the virus will follow the direction of their medical caregiver and every effort will be made to comfort the child while they recover.  
**Please find assurance in the fact that less than 1% of hospitalized patients are younger than 20 years old, and that China reports only one death in that age group.**
- For any student who remains in the U.S. we do have housing arrangements for them for the summer.

As the coronavirus spread first in China, and then became a pandemic, we have felt that our students were safer here. I recognize that some of you are no longer sure that is true. In addition, SEVIS has strongly discouraged Chinese students from returning home. That guidance is now changing to allow such returns, but with the warning that students may not be able to return to the U.S. in a timely fashion if in-person classes resume. Also, we feel that students' education even in distance learning will be stronger if they remain here, due to issues of time difference, access to Google applications that we will use heavily, and potential issues about connectivity. The situation is complicated and changing, and I have been reviewing it with the school's administrators over the last two days.

Because of the closing of businesses and the practice of staying home to suppress the transmission of the virus, and because of the ages of our students, we feel comfortable that they are safe. In fact, traveling to China may expose them to more risk than remaining in their New Jersey homes. We also feel they will learn more and perform better in classes if they stay. However, we also know that families feel a strong urge to be together in times of crisis, and that the news of how the U.S. has handled the coronavirus may create doubt and fear.

At this point, with the changes SEVIS has made, we support each family in making its own decision. If you choose to have your child return to China, they go with our best wishes and we look forward to their eventual return to us. If you choose to have them stay, we will continue to be attentive to their care here.

Seniors:

We want to ease any concerns seniors have surrounding graduating, receiving their diplomas, and transitioning their I-20 to their college or university. Seniors should focus on their on-line classes to earn the credits they need to graduate. They will need to complete all work and pass all classes. As long as they meet all coursework requirements, they will receive their diploma regardless of whether they are able to return to campus or not. Diplomas will be mailed to those who are not in the U.S. Your I-20 will be transferred to your university on June 12, 2020. The one risk you should be aware of is that they may not be able to re-enter the U.S. in time to begin college in the fall. Please know that if seniors do stay in the U.S. to complete their Wardlaw+Hartridge education, we do have housing arrangements available for the summer.

If you have questions as you consider your decision, please send them to me over the next two days. If there is interest, I can schedule a Zoom call for Tuesday, March 24, 2020 at 7:30 AM EST to provide answers and discuss any concerns. Mr. Webster and Dr. Bowman will join that call (I will send via WeChat the link to the meeting and I will have a translator available as well).

If you do plan to depart the United States to return home, you must complete this [GOOGLE FORM](#) immediately.

Please stay safe and know your children are well cared for. You all have our full attention and we appreciate your patience with us as we communicate regarding the situation. To learn more about the school's response to COVID-19, please click this link: <https://www.whschool.org/coronavirus>.

Respectfully,  
Gerard Gonnella  
908-616-8855 (cell)  
[rgonnella@WHschool.org](mailto:rgonnella@WHschool.org)  
WeChat gerardg70