March 9, 2020

Dear Norwalk Public Schools Families and Staff,

As you may know, the first confirmed cases of the COVID-19 coronavirus appeared in our local area over the weekend. Although there is no evidence that any adult or student connected to our schools has been exposed, the health of our students and staff is our number one concern.

Prevention

With this in mind, we are putting in place the following steps to limit exposure for our students and staff:

- Schoolwide assemblies are on hold. Schools are looking at creative ways to share within their school communities, such as videotaping.
- Large group events will be postponed. This includes next weekend’s STEM Expo, as well as musical performances scheduled over the coming days at any school.
- Hand-washing before lunch will be emphasized with adult supervision. Because each building has a different cafeteria set up, this may require changes to lunch waves or other adjustments.
- Out-of-district and out-of-state field trips will be put on hold. Trips out of the country and groups scheduled to come to Norwalk have been cancelled.
- Visitors, mentors and volunteers from outside the direct school community will be put on hold. Professional development sessions will be rescheduled.
- Parent-teacher conferences scheduled to begin shortly will be conducted by telephone or video chat.
- Athletic games and competitions can be held, but without outside spectators. There will be no travel to tournament games.
- Any student or teacher traveling during April break to a country rated under a level 2 or 3 travel advisory by the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) will be subject to a 14 day quarantine before returning to school.
- Aggressive cleaning and disinfecting protocols will be continued in schools and buses.

We will continue to be in close communication with the City of Norwalk and State Health Departments, as well as the State Department of Education, and will adjust measures as necessary as the situation evolves.
Preparations for Ongoing Learning

Although the positive local case of COVID-19 does not impact the current operation of Norwalk Public Schools, we are continuing preparations in the event something occurs in our community that requires us to close one or more schools for a period of time. A next step is to organize lesson plans and materials to continue student learning at home, in the unlikely event of a long-duration closure.

To provide the necessary time and coordination to prepare student materials, school will be cancelled on Thursday, March 12 for all students at Norwalk Public Schools. This day was originally scheduled to be a 90-minute early dismissal day for parent-teacher conferences. Instead, students will be off the entire day. Scheduled afterschool programs and activities are also cancelled.

During this day, teachers, administrators and districtwide staff will work together to prepare materials for students. For elementary students, this will likely include lessons that could be emailed home to students each day in the event of a closure. For middle and high school students, plans specific to each subject will be developed for delivery via Google Classrooms. Plans for special needs students will also be addressed.

We know taking a day off can be difficult for parents, particularly those who work outside the home. However, this step is necessary for the district to prepare for any disruptions in the days and weeks ahead. While we hope a longer-term closure does not become necessary, we are committed to doing our best to make sure students can continue with some of their education, no matter what happens next.

Technology Survey

With the potential for at-home and online learning in mind, we have developed a brief survey about student access to technology and the Internet at home. We ask that you please check your email and fill it out right away, so that we are aware of individual technology needs for virtual learning. While resources are limited, your information will help us develop a plan to send home Chromebooks or provide “hot spots” for students who need equipment or Internet access.

With the exception of Thursday, March 12, I want to emphasize that we are not closing schools at this time. The steps listed above are being taken to limit the exposure to the COVID-19 coronavirus, and to make sure Norwalk is ready if a closure becomes required.

I know this is an unsettling time for parents, children, teachers and staff. By working together, we can do our best to keep our community safe and healthy during these unusual circumstances. Please be sure to watch your email, the district website and social media pages, as well as the City of Norwalk website for official updates.

Sincerely,

Dr. Steven Adamowski
Superintendent, Norwalk Public Schools