

March 11, 2020

Dear Staff and Families,

I wanted to take this opportunity to update you on the concerns regarding COVID-19 and its impact on our community at the present time. Please know that while Newtown Public Schools remain open, this situation may change, and you will receive immediate notification. Any decision to close schools is made with input and support from our local health director, the Town Emergency Management Team, and the State Department of Public Health – all of whom are being guided by the Centers for Disease Control (CDC).

We have made the decision to use **Friday, March 13th** as a professional development day for staff (instead of April 3). **NO STUDENTS SHOULD REPORT TO SCHOOL ON FRIDAY.** We need additional time for our staff to plan for an *Alternative Learning Plan* for students through a distance learning model that will be implemented in the event of an extended school closure. Following our Friday staff development, the details of our learning plan will be shared with all families.

Newtown will also apply for a waiver from the State of Connecticut to support distance learning that may be counted as regular school days. We will keep you informed about whether this is granted. Depending on the length of the closure and the outcome of a State waiver, Newtown may be required to add days to the calendar year through June 30th as is the normal process when emergency closings are necessary.

While students are in our schools, we continue our sanitizing protocols throughout our buildings and on our buses, as well as promoting proper handwashing and minimizing non-essential gatherings or activities. In accordance with the advice from Governor Lamont and the State Department of Public Health, we have canceled (or are in the process of cancelling) all school events, sports, and trips (both in and out of State).

I realize this is a challenging time when emotions are heightened and there is a great deal of increased anxiety. I know that you will continue to support one another as a caring community. We will get through this together.

Sincerely,

Dr. Lorrie Rodrigue, Superintendent