

## Dear Marlborough Parents, Faculty, and School Community;

I am writing to all Marlborough families to urge everyone to be vigilant in following our health guidance from the Marlborough Board of Health.

Please follow these guidelines:

- **Stay home when you are sick.**
- Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, especially after going to the bathroom; before eating; and after blowing your nose, coughing, or sneezing.
- If soap and water are not readily available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol. Always wash hands with soap and water if hands are visibly dirty.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth.
- Cover your cough or sneeze with a tissue, then throw the tissue in the trash.
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces using a regular household cleaning spray or wipe.
- Avoid close contact with people who are sick.
- CDC does not recommend that people who are well wear a facemask to protect themselves from respiratory diseases, including coronavirus.
- Facemasks should be used by people who show symptoms of coronavirus to help prevent the spread of the disease to others, as well as by health care workers those taking care of someone with coronavirus.

I urge everyone to communicate with our staff any concerns you may have regarding your health or your child's, so we can best support you. Self-reporting to the school system is critical. **Self-reporting accurate information is also important.** We have already faced several instances where students or parents have reported to us that they have been tested for coronavirus; only to find out it was a flu test. These instances are exhausting important resources and causing stress for the entire community. Students have been sent to school with coughs, upset stomachs, and other symptoms. We are urging you to use caution and **keep your student home if they are sick.**

We understand many employers have corporate policies asking parents to stay home for up to 14 days for health reasons. As we have been in discussions with the Board of Health, many of these employees are being sent home for coughs or flu like symptoms. Student who have no symptoms and have not been in contact with a person positive for coronavirus or a person under investigation for coronavirus do not have restrictions on attending school.

**If you have had contact with anyone who has been presumed positive or is a confirmed case of coronavirus, please contact the Board of Health at (508) 460-3751 and do not send your student to school** until the administration can consult with the Board of Health.

We all need to partner on following the guidance and allowing the administration to make decisions as best we can to prevent and mitigate the spread of this virus. Please follow the link below to resources the Board of Health has provided.

<https://www.marlborough-ma.gov/board-health/pages/1-corona-virus-information>

### **How are we going to handle field trips, excursions, and large group events at school?**

The Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education department revised their guidance on March 10<sup>th</sup> for field trips and excursions. Here is the link to the guidance:

<http://www.doe.mass.edu/sfs/emergencyplan/covid19.html>

This guidance encourages districts to limit non-essential travel and large events where possible. For this reason, I am directing all my principals to postpone any field trips or excursions that have been scheduled between now and April vacation. We are going to postpone community events to meet this guidance as well. I understand this can be frustrating and place many students and families in a tough position. We are sensitive to the work that our students have put into performances and we will work to the best of our ability to reschedule such events. Again, these difficult decisions are based on the guidance provided by Governor Baker and the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education.

### **What is going to happen to the spring sports season?**

All spring sports are delayed until March 30<sup>th</sup> at the direction of the Massachusetts Interscholastic Athletic Association. We will share continued updates as we receive them.

### **Please remind your children about the appropriate uses of social media**

We have already seen that inappropriate uses of social media can cause our students to become upset and confused. Students 'posing' in masks or sending messages about coronavirus to each other may be jokes or humor for some; but are causing other students' unrest. I strongly encourage a discussion in the home about how we can utilize social media to stay connected with friends and not spread rumors or target students who may become sick. This is a time to come together and support, not divide.

### **How are we going to meet our 180 school day requirement?**

The Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education requires school district to provide 180 days of school for students every year. Because of the concerns for the spread of illness, the Department revised its rules on the 180 day school calendar for this year only. The link above also leads you to this guidance. Here is their rule for the calendar for this year only:

*"All days lost to health, weather, or safety emergencies between March 16 and June 1 must be made up to ensure a 180-day school year or until the district has reached its previously-scheduled 185th day, whichever comes first. If all five snow days have been used prior to this point, the district is not required to schedule additional school days."*

Based on our school calendar as of Friday March 13<sup>th</sup>, our last day of school will be Friday June 19<sup>th</sup>, 2020. However, if it is necessary to close school for a significant period of time due to health or safety emergencies, the last possible day for Marlborough Public Schools will be Tuesday June 23<sup>rd</sup> 2020. This means that Marlborough Public Schools will not be in school beyond June 23, even if we fall short of the 180-day requirement.

### **How are we preparing for school disruption?**

On March 11<sup>th</sup> I asked the faculty to begin preparing enrichment materials for students to access and take home with them should they be needed. In grades K-5, students will have packets to go home with them or be picked up should there be a longer term shut down of schools. In grades 6-12, students can work on their home computers, their chrome books, or even on their phones in Google Classroom if there is a longer term shut down. If you do not have internet access, and this will not work for your child/children, please contact your school principal so we can provide an alternate plan.

This plan is not designed to take the place of or replace instruction. This is also not meant to replace lost school days either- as stated above, the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education has provided guidance on our school year and that days will not be made up once we have fulfilled our current school calendar. Our intent in pulling these materials together is to keep students engaged in the routine of education. This is for enrichment when classroom instruction is not possible.

**Is there a potential for a longer than usual dismissal from school?**

The decision to dismiss a school early, or to cancel school related to coronavirus will be made in consultation with the Marlborough Board of Health. **To best prepare for any situation, please have a plan in place for an early release for your elementary aged students and have plans in place to allow your older students to access your home.** Early releases may be used much more often for these purposes. In addition, the district **may have to take precautionary measures to close for a longer period.** Right now, you should be planning childcare for as early as Monday Morning for an extended time period. While most districts are closing for two weeks, there is a possibility that a closure could extend beyond that point.

**Please continue to follow the guidance that our Board of Health has placed on their website:**

<https://www.marlborough-ma.gov/board-health/pages/1-corona-virus-information>

Again, thank you in advance for your cooperation and understanding. The guidance I am sharing today could change with additional information, and I will be continuing to update the community.

Michael Bergeron

Superintendent of Schools