

Flemington-Raritan Regional School District
Ms. Kari McGann
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TO: Flemington-Raritan Regional School District Parents/Guardians & Community
FROM: Kari McGann, Superintendent of Schools
DATE: March 13, 2020
RE: ***School Closing – Beginning March 16 for Students***

The health and wellness of our staff and students continue to be our top priority. These are trying times we are in; the coronavirus has been declared a pandemic, the Dow's 11-year bull market has ended, the National Collegiate Athletic Association basketball tournament will play with no fans in the stands, Major League baseball might move to different cities, Broadway in New York City has gone dark, colleges and universities have ordered students to leave campus housing, even Disney in Anaheim and Walt Disney World in Orlando closed their Mickey Mouse gates to allow our Nation to help contain the spread of the coronavirus.

Today we awaited further guidance from the Hunterdon County Health Department and state officials regarding providing additional latitude to school superintendents with respect to school closures. It is important to note that we are unaware of any confirmed cases of COVID-19 within the boundaries of our school community or our county.

The evidence of the coronavirus spread requires our attention to mitigate further movement from one community to another. We must focus on mitigation and reducing community spread. Social distancing is the only strategy that currently impacts the eventual spread of COVID-19. According to the New York Times article, "*Coronavirus Declared a Pandemic*" on Thursday, March 12, there were 1,135 confirmed cases in the United States on Wednesday afternoon, using data compiled by Johns Hopkins. The death toll grew to at least 36. Yesterday, German Chancellor Angela Merkel shared her concerns about the percentages of the population that are likely to become infected. I do not share this data to frighten or alarm, but rather to speak truth and reality to the challenges ahead of us. Now is the time to be prudent to protect and support our families, children, community members, and colleagues in Flemington-Raritan Regional Schools, *not* a time to panic.

Therefore, after consultation with the Hunterdon County Health Department and all the Hunterdon County School Districts, the following measures are announced:

- **Monday, March 16, will now be closed for students** and a professional development day for staff and faculty. School buildings will be available from the hours of 9 AM until 12 PM for parents to pick up personal belongings from school, retrieve any learning materials that were left behind, pick up medicine from the nurses' office, and receive assistance needed during this transition.
- All Flemington-Raritan Regional Schools will move to a virtual/remote learning environment on Tuesday, March 17. Learning will be delivered to students electronically via home instruction. **Schools will be closed to the public.**

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- As of Sunday, March 15, all afterschool, evening, and weekend activities will be either canceled or postponed. All facility events and rental activities will be canceled, rescheduled, or postponed. Athletic practices and competitions will be canceled until further notice.
- The closing will occur for a minimum of two weeks, effective through Sunday, March 29, with students scheduled to return on March 30. The school district will re-evaluate the length of closure and follow guidelines provided by our public health officials. **We will re-evaluate the situation on March 25. If we are not ready to re-open we will stay closed through spring break.**

Please note, that upon reevaluation of the situation on March 25, the District may remain closed through the end of spring break, returning on April 21. Our goal is to maintain instructional continuity using virtual means. To this end, your child's teacher(s) have developed home instruction lessons and activities. Your child teacher(s) will provide communication regarding instruction.

During this period of virtual learning, email is the preferred communication method for parent-teacher communications. Teachers will be available for "virtual office hours" on weekdays if students or parents have questions. Please communicate with your child's teacher for more information. Contemplating weeks without a regular school routine can be overwhelming. Please know that we are doing our very best to make decisions that are in the best interest of our entire school community. Updates will be posted to the district website as new and relevant information becomes available. We thank you for your patience and understanding as we continue to work through this difficult situation. Just as in the past, when we were faced with challenging circumstances, I feel grateful and truly honored to serve alongside such a fantastic group of dedicated professionals and caring community.

The Flemington-Raritan Regional School District is working quickly and collaboratively, pulling together in the same fluid motion upstream against many challenges. Momentous achievements have been accomplished in the last 48 hours; from distributing 1,500 devices in only one day to sharing resources with our Hunterdon area school district leaders, creating screencasts to support instruction, developing websites with "how-to videos," making lists of contacts for student phone calls, finding a way to provide an iPad to all of our grade 1 and 2 students, the list goes on and on. It is impressive to witness the focus of our staff and faculty on the safety and well-being of our school community.

I am grateful for your continued understanding and support. I will continue to update you as new information becomes available. I will do my very best to keep you all informed and continue to be transparent with the decisions that require my attention. Please continue to be vigilant to check your e-mail, follow me on Twitter @karimcgann, follow the District on Facebook @flemrarschools, and check the District website at www.frsd.k12.nj.us for information.

Sincerely,

Kari McGann
Superintendent of Schools