

NEW MILFORD PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Office of the Superintendent

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Dr. Kerry Parker
Superintendent of Schools

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Dear NMPS Families and Staff,

There has been a great deal of information and education about COVID-19 happening in our state since my last letter to you. I appreciate your understanding and support as efforts to contain the spread of the virus are evolving daily.

On Monday, following the release of his recommendations to the State of Connecticut, Governor Lamont invited all superintendents, town and state elected officials, and emergency management operations staff to participate in a conference call with leaders from the Department of Public Health, the Department of Education, and Emergency Management officials in order to update us regarding the virus. On Tuesday, Governor Lamont officially signed declarations of civil preparedness and public health emergencies, enabling him to take specific, swift actions to respond to COVID-19. Consensus still is that the best way to keep everyone safe and healthy is to follow CDC guidelines, which include social distancing.

Yesterday, I attended a meeting of regional superintendents and health directors where we collaborated on how best to implement the Department of Public Health's recommended strategy of social distancing. The purpose of social distancing is to limit social interactions in order to reduce the spread of COVID-19. In addition, we discussed the Governor's recommendation that events involving over 100 people be canceled or rescheduled to minimize the spread of the virus.

As a result of recommendations from Governor Lamont and the Department of Public Health, New Milford Public Schools is joining surrounding school districts in rescheduling or canceling some upcoming events. We will continue to have after-school and evening activities for our students that do not involve large groups; however, any events that involve the general public or spectators will be suspended until further notice.

Below is a partial list of canceled or rescheduled events. Each school will provide additional details about their particular events.

- The Connecticut Interscholastic Athletic Conference (CIAC) has canceled all winter sporting tournaments.
- NMPS Parent-Teacher conferences will be conducted by telephone.

- The PTO asks that book fair orders be completed online and/or by using the e-wallet option. Students may also bring in funds (cash or check payable to PTO) on Friday during school hours.
- PPTs, 504s and case conferences may be conducted by telephone, by parent request.
- Field trips and other student travel have been canceled or postponed through April 30 (date may be extended).
- The New Milford High School all school musical, *The Addams Family*, has been postponed until May (subject to further postponement).
- Parent University is canceled.

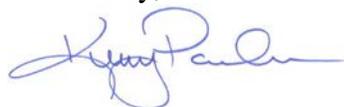
Our district is canceling or modifying these events as we implement effective practices related to the spread of an infectious disease. Much of the information about COVID-19 indicates that children are not affected by the virus in the same way as adults. Our school leaders and staff can monitor the health of our students as they oversee procedures and protocols each day. They have no ability, however, to monitor community members as guests at school events – which is why we are limiting contact at this time. Our focus is on providing a healthy environment for our children.

To that end, as a district we have increased prevention efforts by providing additional handwashing opportunities for students and increasing space between students to reduce physical contact. We are working with our Food Services department to eliminate student entry of PIN numbers at lunch time. Our students' health is also supported by the bus company's cleaning practices. All-Star cleaning staff (not drivers) perform their Lysol disinfecting routine at the end of the day when the buses return, in addition to the start of each shift. When bus drivers arrive in the morning they double up by cleaning their own seating area, steering wheel and door controls at the start of each shift with Lysol or Clorox wipes. The bus drivers are also disinfecting the seats and wiping down handrails and windows.

Some have asked why we are not simply closing school. At this time, the decision to close schools due to the virus will be made in coordination with the Department of Public Health. The Commissioner of Education expects districts who must close to make up their missed days in order to complete the 180 school day requirement. Any missed school days must be made up prior to June 30. Missed days will be added on to the school calendar in June and/or be taken from other district holidays, such as Spring Recess. **The district may schedule one or two delayed openings in the near future to allow teachers to plan for missed instructional time.**

I recognize that these changes may cause hardship and disappointment for students, families and staff. Please know that my intent is always what is best for the health and safety of all students and staff in New Milford Public Schools. New updates will be sent as soon as I have information. Please contact me if you have any questions or concerns. My email is parkerk@newmilfordps.org. Stay well!

Yours truly,



Kerry Parker
Superintendent