

March 11, 2020 Letter to parents from the Directors:

Dear Hilltown Families:

We are writing to update you on the various measures we are taking in response to the outbreak of Coronavirus Disease. We have been in contact with our local health department nurse, participated in statewide conference calls, and consulted with our school physician in an effort to make informed, practical decisions.

The current news is that there are still no reported cases of COVID-19 in Hampshire, Hampden, or Franklin Counties. However, as all of the public health officials we have come into contact with have emphasized, this is a very fluid situation that requires constant monitoring. We are taking proactive steps now that we believe are helpful. In terms of our facilities, we are doing the following to potentially mitigate exposure to COVID-19

- K-6 students are having lunches in classrooms. Less mixing of students is recommended.
- Hand washing at the start of the day and before eating
- We are strongly enforcing our no food sharing rule, including not allowing students to be eating in the hallways for any reasons.
- Our cleaners will be sterilizing twice per shift with focus on door knobs, tabletops, non-porous chairs, kitchen appliances, and all sinks, faucets and drinking fountains.
- We are encouraging everyone who is sick to stay home.

In terms of school events, we have done the following:

- Art Spark/25th Anniversary Party has been postponed
- Grandparents and Special Elders Day has been cancelled
- Spring Music Festival will not be a live gathering. We are working on an alternate way of students performing and sharing with the community.
- There will be no field trips in the months of March and April.

Pending guidance from the Public Health Nurse, we will make decisions about All School, Publishing Parties/Museums, etc, and other upcoming school events.

The Department of Elementary and Secondary Education has revised the 180 days of school requirements as follows:

*In light of concerns about possible school closings for public health reasons, I have updated DESE's guidance about the requirement for 180 days of school to provide relief to districts. (Note: The Department will continue to revisit this guidance if the situation warrants it.):*

*All days lost to health, weather, or safety emergencies between the first day of the school year and March 15 must be made up by rescheduling full school days to ensure a 180-day school year.*

*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.*

*Districts will not be expected to make up any days lost to health, weather, or safety emergencies that occur after June 1.*

What this means for Hilltown is that the current last day of school is Friday, June 19. If we have to close for 3 days or fewer, we would make up all of the days, but if we close for more than 3 days, we would not have to make up those days. Therefore, the latest the last day of school will be is Wednesday, June 24.

We will continue to update you with information as it becomes available. Please let us know if you have specific questions or concerns.

Sincerely,

Dan, Lara, and Deirdre