

March 14, 2020

Dear Nantucket School Community,

I am sure you have been anxiously awaiting news of our schools in this climate of concern over the coronavirus (COVID-19). I will share that decisions such as these do not happen quickly, nor are they made in a vacuum. There are many people at the state and local levels (the Governor's office, the Commissioner of Education, State and local Public Health Officials, Nantucket Cottage Hospital and Town of Nantucket officials) who have been weighing in on the best thing to do for children and communities.

Although we have not had a confirmed case of the virus on Nantucket, we believe that it is likely that there are members of our community who have been infected and it will be a matter of time before "community spread" happens and our number of cases begin to rise. After much discussion yesterday and today, it has been determined by all parties involved that the best decision right now is:

Starting Monday, March 16th we will close the Nantucket Schools to students for the next two weeks (an anticipated return to school on March 30th).

Closing our schools is only a part of the broader solution to prevent community spread of this virus. Please understand that this decision is not designed for our students to be on "vacation." If students and families continue to meet together in groups outside of school, this initial 10-day closure will not have the desired impact. It is critical that students and families refrain from meeting in large groups and practice social distancing as recommended by the CDC.

Please note:

- All school buildings and grounds (including athletic fields and the pool) will be closed to the outside public for the duration of the closure.
- We will notify you of a day that students can come in and get books, learning packets and personal items.
- The spring athletic season is postponed, per the MIAA, until March 30th.

We will continue to closely monitor this situation and follow the guidance of our local Boards of Health, the Massachusetts Department of Public Health (MDPH), and the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE). We will make a decision about whether we need to extend the March 16 through March 27 closure for a longer period of time no later than Thursday, March 26, and we will communicate that to staff and families as soon as possible. Regardless of the length of our district closure, DESE guidance indicates that the last day of school for all schools will not go beyond June 30, 2020 as originally outlined in the additional 5 snow days embedded in the 2019-2020 calendar.

Please understand that this is a rapidly evolving and unprecedented situation. We appreciate your patience and understanding during this challenging time, and we will keep you informed as decisions are made. We have faith in our staff and the Nantucket Community; and we have no doubt that we will rise to the occasion to best serve our children.

Respectfully,

W. Michael Cozort, Superintendent of Schools

Elizabeth Hallett, Ed.D., Deputy Superintendent of Schools

