

March 12, 2020

Dear Walpole Public Schools Community,

I am writing to provide you with an update regarding our continued proactive planning in response to COVID-19.

As I am sure you are aware, the public received some guidance during the Governor's press conference. In addition, Superintendents received updated guidance from the MA Department of Public Health (MDPH). Tomorrow, we will receive additional guidance from the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE). As a district, we continue to stay informed by health advisories issued by the CDC, MDPH and DESE. This includes consistent communication between the District Administration, Walpole Board of Health, and the Town Administrator.

We are currently implementing the following:

- Effective immediately, all parent-teacher conferences will be moved from in-person to a phone call conference. Teachers will contact parent/guardian's primary phone number as listed in Aspen during the scheduled conference time. Please email the teacher directly if you have a specific number you would like the teacher to call. If this impacts your availability, please reschedule the conference with the classroom teacher.
- Effective March 16, all out-of-school field trips (international, out of state and out of town), performances, and other large-scale school events are canceled or postponed through March 31. We hope to reschedule some of the field trips and events to later in the school year. Details regarding these specific events/trips will come from your building principals. In the coming weeks, we will reassess to determine if this date is to be extended.
- Effective Monday, March 16, all building rentals to outside organizations will be suspended until further notice.
- Effective March 16, all school events that invite volunteers or outside vendors (non-service providers) into our schools that present to our children are cancelled until further notice.
- We have a high school play performance this weekend. Unfortunately, we will have one performance on Saturday for cast and crew family members only. We intend to disinfect the auditorium after the performance. [We hope to reschedule another performance to later in the school year.](#)
- Educators will not attend out-of-district professional development conferences effective March 16 through March 31. We will provide an update for out-of-district professional development beyond March at a later date as things continue to evolve.
- We will remain vigilant about keeping a clean school environment. Our custodians are engaged in the cleaning of schools and have augmented this regular cleaning with additional cleaning and sanitizing of hard surfaces and touchpoints. The district purchased electrostatic sprayers to help disinfect large areas.

I understand that many students will be disappointed by these cancellations or postponements, and I regret having to make this decision. We will do our best to reschedule most of the events. However, in the absence of additional guidance, I felt the need to make a quick, prudent decision.

The media can elicit anxiety in both children and families. Below is a link to some resources of supporting and speaking with children of all ages about COVID-19 from the National Association of School Psychologists (NASP).

[www.nasponline.org/resources-and-publications/resources-and-podcasts/school-climate-safety-and-crisis/health-crisis-resources/talking-to-children-about-covid-19-\(coronavirus\)-a-parent-resource](http://www.nasponline.org/resources-and-publications/resources-and-podcasts/school-climate-safety-and-crisis/health-crisis-resources/talking-to-children-about-covid-19-(coronavirus)-a-parent-resource).

We will continue to share resources with you through our principal weekly e-notes.

Please be reminded of the following precautions:

- Practice good hand hygiene. Wash your hands often and thoroughly with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands. Use Alcohol-based hand sanitizer when soap and water are not available.
- When coughing and sneezing, cover your mouth and nose with a tissue. You can also cough or sneeze into your sleeve. Throw used tissues in the trash and immediately wash your hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds.
- Avoid sharing drinking glasses, cups, eating utensils, dishes, towels or other items. Wash these items thoroughly with soap and water after use.
- We urge community members to follow the advice coming from the CDC and the Governor that individuals who are sick, immunocompromised, or elderly avoid large events for their protection.

Again, please keep children home from school when they are ill. If your child has any of the following symptoms please keep them home from school: temperature greater than 100, coughing, vomiting, diarrhea, any rash not yet diagnosed by a physician, red or pink itchy eye, and/or drainage from eye, and any contagious illness such as chicken pox, strep throat or flu.

The Novel Coronavirus continues to be an evolving situation that we are following closely. We will keep you informed with updates and information that become available to us. We continue to seek out information, sharing it as appropriate, and following all recommended guidelines to ensure the safety of our students and staff, as we are deeply committed to their well-being. Please keep in mind that this situation is fluid and could change daily. We appreciate your patience. All of us in the District appreciate the many families who have communicated their support. As always, working together as a community continues to be one of the best responses we have available.

Sincerely,
Bridget A. Gough, Ed.D.
Superintendent