



Weston Public Schools  
Office of the Superintendent  
William S. McKersie, Ph.D.

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## MEMORANDUM

To: WPS Families & Staff  
Date: March 6, 2020  
Subject: COVID-19 Update 3.6.2020 – **School/District Closure Procedures**

### Background

We will be providing periodic updates to WPS families and staff about the district's efforts to keep students and staff safe and healthy through the COVID-19 outbreak. The first update was last week (2.27.20), which provided a comprehensive statement about our two-phase approach to dealing with COVID-19: (1) prevention; (2) preparing for possible school/district closure. Intensive work has been underway on both phases of the action planning.

You can expect updates on the following topics over the next several days: School/District Closure Procedures; Travel Restrictions; School and Classroom Cleaning; and, Academic Programs During Possible Closure. The updates will focus on specific topics.

**Our updates are sent in a “Be Prepared” mode. They should not be allowed to induce concerns, fears, or rumors. Our intent is to help keep WPS families and staff calm during what has become an understandably trying and anxious time.**

We want to reiterate that we are working closely with the Weston-Westport Health District, our Town Leaders under the direction of First Selectman Chris Spaulding, and Weston's first responders. The First Selectman has established a working group to coordinate prevention of and, if necessary, responses to COVID-19 in Weston.

### School/District Closure Procedures

Now that some schools and districts in the United States have closed due to COVID-19, we want to reiterate our procedures for district closure. We have no immediate reason to anticipate closing, but we want all families and staff to know the procedures we are following in considering whether or not to close, and the process for announcing the decision. (We are expanding on what was outlined in the 2.27.20 memorandum.)

1. The WPS will only close if medically confirmed cases of COVID-19 are identified in the district, or medical and health authorities are recommending or mandating closing because of COVID-19 incident rates in the immediate area. The decision to close will be based on consultation with the WPS Medical Advisor, the Weston-Westport Health District (which includes CDC consultation), and state authorities. The decision will not be based solely on district administration thinking or analysis.
2. School closures in Weston will mean full district closure, for both educational and health reasons. The close proximity of our schools on one campus, and the overlap of families and staff across the four schools, would require us to close the full district.
3. We are working with medical and state authorities to determine the threshold guidelines for district closure. Medical and public health experts will determine from analysis of current data and fact patterns on COVID-19 the safest threshold level. Please be assured that we will have threshold guidance as soon as possible. When we have that information, we will share it.
4. We will not preemptively close the district following vacations or other extended breaks. We have had questions if we would be doing so after spring vacation, for instance, given the traveling norms for Weston families. To repeat the 2.27.20 memorandum, we request that families and staff confer with CDC travel advisories and use good judgement on private travel decisions. If family members or staff become ill while traveling, we request that the school (supervisor) be informed after the trip, and that affected individuals not return to school until well.
5. In all cases, travelling or not, we ask that families and staff immediately contact your school administration and nurse if you are ill. We need to know why students and staff are out—illness or for other purposes. We will protect individual privacy. We track absences to catch any troubling trends—absence rates at this point are typical for this influenza season.
6. We are developing academic program plans for students if we have to close. Administrators, teachers and union leaders are working on plans, with input from the CSDE, our regional education agency (CES) and area districts. Central to our academic planning has been the question of how to handle lost school days relative to the state's 180-day requirement for the length of the school year. On Thursday (3.5.20), the Commissioner of Education announced that, in the event of closures due to COVID-19, "schools should exhaust all other options to make up for any lost school days." When those options are exhausted, districts may apply for a waiver of the 180-day requirement.

**Simply put, to abide by state law, we will have to add days to the end of the school year, or reduce spring vacation, to account for any lost school days. We understand that this is a challenging schedule requirement for families, students and staff. We will factor it into our academic program planning. Please anticipate an update on the plan and potential schedule shortly.**