



West Orange Public Schools
179 Eagle Rock Avenue
West Orange, New Jersey 07052
(973) 669-5400 ext. 20512 Fax (973) 669-1432

Superintendent of Schools

J. Scott Cascone, Ed. D.

March 15, 2020

Dear West Orange Public School Families and Students,

I hope this finds you all well and having had enjoyed a restful and peaceful weekend with loved ones.

Over the course of the next week as we prepare to open our schools for virtual learning on Monday, March 23, while our community simultaneously manages the challenges of the COVID-19 public health situation, there will be many questions and thus numerous communications which will be shared with you. It is important that you stay tuned and connected through email as well as our social media platforms. If you have not already set up accounts on Facebook, Twitter, or Instagram, you are strongly encouraged to do so, if for no other reason, to stay up to date.

I don't want to overburden you today with too much information, so I'm starting with that which is most relevant for the next 48 hours.

Food Services:

Earlier today, a letter was sent home via email as well as post on the district website and social media relative to how families in need can access and will be provided with Food Services while school is closed next week. A contact phone number was provided in that letter, if you have more specialized needs, you should feel free to reach out.

Social distancing on spring break:

The utilization of our spring break in lieu of a forced closure was done principally to provide the necessary time to the school district to ensure that when we move over to a virtual learning model we may do so as effectively and as comfortably for our students and parents as possible. This is important to note, as the methods employed in our community relative to social distancing is the same as that of those school districts who will be closing and that, unlike a typical spring break, play dates and socializing are to be minimized as CDC guidelines suggest.

Over the last two days I have been gathering information and consulting with various experts in the medical and disease control fields to gain a better grasp of what we all should be doing at this juncture to assist in the containment of the outbreak of the Coronavirus. The links* below will provide you with specific guidelines and steps for social distancing. However, the overall rule of thumb, as hard as this may be to accept and do, is to maintain a distance no less than 6 feet from anyone other than your immediate family. A number of posts have also been made to social media in this regard; you are encouraged to review them.

Present academic work requirements:

This advisory pertains primarily to high school and, to a lesser extent, middle school. In some cases, prior to the calling of Spring break for this coming week there may be assignments which had been posted and required of students. Specific questions related to whether these assignments are still due should be directed to the teacher. My overall view on this is that with the impending opening of an entirely new form of schooling, it is prudent and advisable for as many of these previously existing assignments to be completed.

Technology:

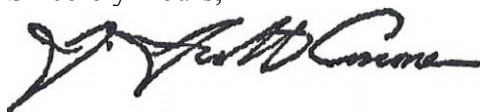
In order for this virtual learning approach to work, we must ensure that all families have access to a device and/or Internet access at home. Starting tomorrow, the district will be moving forward with an aggressive and personalized outreach effort to families in order to identify the specific needs. Future advisories and resources will be shared and posted on the district website as soon as possible.

In the interim, for low-income families, if necessary, please avail yourself of a low-cost internet service provided by Comcast: Internet Essentials. Please click on the following link: <https://www.internetessentials.com/covid19>. More details on this program can be found on the district website.

On a daily basis, we come together as a community of families, students, staff, and community partners and execute with great precision a tremendously complex undertaking: the education and round-trip transportation of almost 7000 students. What enables us to do this is that we are unified and committed to our respective responsibilities and collective mission. That is exactly what is called for and necessary at this time.

As I hope is evident in this communication, your civil servants in the public school district are doing everything from their part to support you in working with us and working together for the benefit, safety, and well-being of our children. Together we will overcome this crisis of the day and come out of it stronger, better, and more unified than ever before.

Sincerely Yours,



J. Scott Cascone, Ed. D.
Superintendent of Schools

*Social distancing links:

<https://medium.com/@ariadnelabs/social-distancing-this-is-not-a-snow-day-ac21d7fa78b4>

<https://www.washingtonpost.com/lifestyle/2020/03/14/parenting-tips-coronavirus/>

https://twitter.com/dr_scottcascone/status/1239038915169914880?s=12