

Somerset Public Schools

Somerset Berkley Regional School District

All Students Achieving Excellence

March 18, 2020

Dear Somerset and Somerset Berkley Families,

On Friday, March 13, my leadership team and I made the difficult decision to close schools for a period of two weeks. We knew how disruptive this would be to our students and their families. Yet, we recognized the critical importance to adhere to the guidelines and recommendations being made by our local, state, and federal governments to support the safety not only of our students and staff but for our larger communities during this unprecedented event. As everyone knows now, two days later, Governor Charlie Baker implemented a three-week school closure across the Commonwealth. We currently expect to return to school on Tuesday, April 7.

In the meantime, I have created a new page on the school districts' website that contains information regarding the coronavirus. Students and families can link to that page [here](#). This webpage contains resources and guides to help families discuss coronavirus with their children as well as providing information related to the delivery of special education services during this school closure.

While not located there yet, this site will also include digital learning and educational resources, including links to enrichment and learning activities that our dedicated teachers have been preparing and creating. The information and resources listed on this site will continue to grow over the coming days. We know that these resources and activities cannot replace the inspiring and engaging instruction that occurs in our classrooms and schools each day. Rather, these resources are intended for students to practice skills they have already learned, provide opportunities to explore and expand on previously taught curriculum, and maintain their learning mindset while at home.

State and federal officials and agencies have urged "social distancing" as a critical means to mitigate the spread of the coronavirus. Social distancing means avoiding gatherings in large groups (25+) and maintaining six feet of separation at smaller gatherings to lower the risk of transmission to others. The state has encouraged families to restrict their children's group activities and social gatherings.

For students in Somerset and Somerset Berkley Regional who receive free or reduced-price lunches, we are providing grab-and-go lunches at two different locations: North Elementary School and Somerset Berkley Regional High School. These lunches are available for pick-up Monday through Friday between 11:30 AM and 1:00 PM. If families are not able to provide transportation to either of these locations please contact your child's school or central office and we will attempt to find alternative means of getting the meals to you.

The Somerset and Somerset Berkley Regional School Committees have made an important change to meetings to facilitate participation while adhering to state guidance on prohibiting gatherings of more than twenty-five people and practicing social distancing. Beginning with the Somerset School Committee meeting on Tuesday, March 17th, meetings will take place virtually. The districts are using the Zoom web-based video conferencing platform to host these meetings. Members of the public can view these meetings through Zoom. Information to access these meetings will be posted on the school district website. For instance, information for today's

Somerset Berkley Regional School Committee meeting at 5:30 PM can be found through a pop-up alert when one visits somersetschools.org.

I find myself saying frequently to people that we are in an unprecedented situation and are navigating uncharted waters. I am so fortunate to have an amazing and dedicated leadership team, including central office directors and support staff, building leadership, teacher-leaders, and leadership from the Somerset Teachers' Association. Together, we have been working to make the best of this situation for students and to mitigate the learning regressions during this school closure. We are hoping for a return to normalcy on April 7th while preparing for the possibility of a closure that extends through or beyond April vacation. If you have specific questions, please do not hesitate to contact your child's school. I will continue to share information with you and provide updates as new information is learned and decisions are made.

Sincerely,

Jeffrey Schoonover