



Hopatcong Borough Schools

Mr. Art DiBenedetto
Superintendent of Schools

Learning Today. Leading Tomorrow.

To: The Hopatcong Borough School Community

From: Mr. Art DiBenedetto, *Superintendent*

Re: Coronavirus, COVID-19

Date: March 9, 2020

All school districts have received some guidance under New Jersey Department of Education (NJDOE); this is in regard to a non-voluntary closing of schools. As you may know, the State or a local or county health department can direct a district to close given the threat of the Coronavirus, COVID-19 illness. Should that occur, the District must be ready with a plan that will provide equitable access to the instruction of all students. Additionally the District must include how it will address students with special needs and free and reduced lunch needs. This note will address those items with the understanding that we are still getting new information from the Department of Education.

The following are in no prioritized order. It is vital that this be carefully read, and if you have comments, they should be emailed to me immediately at adibenedetto@hopatcongschools.org.

- a. The educational services for students in kindergarten, first, second or third grade, will be provided in packet form. Information and assignments will be paper-based. Web-based activities will also be provided because if school is closed there is going to be significant time to fill in a day. Such activities will be voluntary and serve as suggestions to fill that time. These packets will be readied and loaded into student back-packs. It is recommended that these be kept at home because none of us can predict if and when any school closing might take place.
- b. The default method of delivering instruction in grades 4 through 12 will be through Google Classroom. In order to accomplish this, students should be taking home their Chromebooks on a daily basis as should staff members so a sudden closing

does not influence instructional potential. It is understood that there are varying degrees of faculty expertise with Google Classroom; and there are significant instructional activities for using it on the district website. Teachers may choose another digital format to communicate with students, the key being communication not methodology.

- c. Beginning immediately or as they are developed, Google Classroom assignments will be downloaded to student Chromebooks prior to getting home, so there is less dependency on home internet access.
- d. All staff members are expected to provide instruction, including special teachers and speech therapists. Occupational and physical therapists will attempt to communicate some form of parentally provided therapy if appropriate to the child.
- e. We have not received guidance from the State as to whether or not teachers are expected in their classrooms should the District be closed. Traditionally the rule has been that online instruction must come from a classroom; I continue to try to check what the expectation will be on that topic. A presence at school will simplify phone contact potential.
- f. I have contacted neighboring, bus-sharing districts to ascertain whether or not an early-dismissal or delayed opening might assist staff to prepare assignments. We are meeting on this topic tomorrow. Ample notice to working families will be provided.
- g. We are aware certainly that some families may not have internet access, hence the caution for web-based instruction. Those families should leave me a message at 973 398-8801. We are investigating the location of Altice/Optimum hotspots in town, of which there are many. We are also trying to purchase equipment that will allow for temporary “mobile hot spots.”
- h. We are looking to deliver lunches for free and reduced lunch students via use of district vehicles and routes generated from the location of free and reduced lunch students. At the same time, we are trying to work out using our food service vendor for the preparation of such lunches. However, that outcome will be based on whether or not staff members can be in the building. Additionally, there are restrictions on what type of food we can deliver. More to follow on that item.
- i. Counselors and Child Study Team Members have the potential for phone contact to students and families with whom they case manage. It should be noted that special

education timelines have been designated as impossible to keep should an emergency closing take place.

- j. It is likely that home instruction will begin one day after the closing is ordered. Again, I must state that lack of clarification from the DOE puts us at a disadvantage in providing more concrete info.
- k. I must also inform you that some students are concerned about CoVid-19, especially younger ones. Please check us this recommended link. <https://www.brainpop.com/health/diseasesinjuriesandconditions/coronavirus/>
- l. While school is open, please do not send any child who is ill. Children with a fever will be sent home and a doctor's note regarding clearance to return will be required. If a child states that he/she has been exposed to the virus, and this has happened, the nurses have been instructed to have security bring the child outside to await pick-up. Please talk to your child about the seriousness of this situation.

In summary, more information will be provided as it develops. Please remember that if we are ordered to shut down, we will have no choice. Your questions and comments are welcomed.

Respectfully, art dibenedetto, supt., Hopatcong