

BERNARDS TOWNSHIP PUBLIC SCHOOLS

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March 12, 2020

Dear Parent/Guardian:

Our district's number one priority is always the health and well-being of our students, staff, and visitors. The novel coronavirus (COVID-19) threatens this core value and recently we have been concerned that it may also impede our ability to achieve our primary mission of educating students. Consequently, we have been proactively preparing to deliver instruction through distance learning so that if schools had to be closed we could continue to educate students. **In order to continue our preparations for distance learning, all schools will dismiss on our early dismissal schedule on Friday, March 13, 2020.** The NJDOE has indicated that if we have a plan in place for consistent home instruction days while closed, such days would count toward our 180-day requirement.

Public health officials continue to advise that social distancing is the most effective strategy to prevent the spread of COVID-19. We recognize that school closures will create challenges for our families and our community, but we also recognize our responsibility to address this public health concern. In an effort to meet this responsibility, **we will be closing our buildings and implementing a distance learning plan effective Monday, March 16, 2020 and extending through Sunday, March 29, 2020. We hope to reopen school on Monday, March 30, 2020 but that may prove to be impossible; the decision will be made as the date approaches. For however long schools remain closed, all field trips, school events, activities and facility rentals are canceled. Some events may be rescheduled for future dates after schools are reopened. Understandably, questions will arise for events, field trips, activities and facility rentals for Monday, March 30th, 2020 and beyond; answers to these questions will be provided to stakeholders as soon as they become available.**

Many people have contacted me with a host of opinions and questions related to the current health situation we are in. I thank everyone for their suggestions, encouragement, and questions. Please understand that I will be unable to respond to all of the emails, however I would like to address a few items now:

- ALL activities for this Friday and the coming weekend are canceled EXCEPT for the SAT scheduled for Saturday morning at Ridge High School, which is currently still on.
- The Board of Education meeting on Monday, March 16, 2020 will continue as a virtual meeting, the public will be able to participate in the meeting through special instructions that will be posted to the district homepage.
- The 8th grade trip to Washington, DC planned for April 2 and 3 is canceled, however the administration will investigate if it may be possible to reschedule at a later date, further information on this subject will come from the school.
- The Junior Prom scheduled for April 3 is being considered, information will come from the school.

We appreciate your support and understanding of this decision. We will follow up with the details of our distance learning plans and expectations for students. We will continue to maintain regular communication with our local public health official and with our learning community during the school closure. Thank you for helping us keep our community safe by supporting and reinforcing the important strategy of fighting this virus through social distancing. Together, with patience, caring, resilience, and grit (exactly what we want to model for our children!) we will get through this challenging time.

Sincerely,



Nick Markarian