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Dear Parent/Guardian,

During this time of school closure, we would like to give you valuable tools to keep you and your family healthy and safe. There have been many recommendations from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the New Jersey Department of Health and our local Bernards Township Health Department concerning the recent outbreak of the Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19). The amount of information that is available to us can be overwhelming at times and difficult to sift through. We hope that this letter will help you as a parent or caregiver to navigate through this situation.

Containment and mitigation are used to slow the transmission of a virus like COVID-19. In order for this to happen, you may see large-scale events and meetings being canceled or postponed, employers switching to online workplaces, and school closures. A school closure is a pivotal step in the containment and mitigation of a disease outbreak. To make this practice effective, the community should practice social distancing to keep everyone healthy.

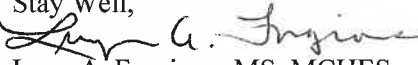
**What is Social Distancing?** According to the CDC this means “remaining out of congregate settings, avoiding mass gatherings and maintaining distance”. It may be tempting once the entire family is home to either go out together or visit relatives. Staying at home and limiting travel is crucial to mitigation. Do not have people over for dinner, friends over for playdates, sleepovers, or other gatherings.

**What isn't Social Distancing?** Social distancing is **not** the same as self-quarantine or isolation. These two techniques are utilized to restrict the movement of people to limit the transfer or spread of an infection. Social distancing is a behavioral practice, while the other two techniques have a location constraint. If the community cooperates with this important behavioral practice, we will be able to see less infection and be able to return to a typical school year.

**Quick Tips to Stay Healthy:**

- If you interact with others, do your best to maintain a 6-foot radius away from other people.
- Use proper hand hygiene before and after going out around other people. Wash your hands with warm water and soap for at least 20 seconds. If you cannot wash your hands use a hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol.
- Disinfect and clean commonly used objects and surfaces e.g. doorknobs, remote controls etc.
- If you feel sick, stay home. Call your healthcare provider if you have symptoms like a cough, fever, or difficulty breathing. Key word: call ahead.
- Cover your cough or sneeze with a tissue, then throw it in the trash.

Your child may have questions regarding the COVID-19 outbreak in the coming weeks. We urge you to look at the many resources available to all families and community members from the Bernards Township Health Department, New Jersey Department of Health, and the CDC. Take some time to discuss current events with your children and keep yourself informed with the most up to date and accurate information from these resources. Thank you for your cooperation.

Stay Well,  
  
Lucy A. Forgione, MS, MCHES  
Health Officer

  
Nick Markarian  
Bernards Township School District Superintendent