

Dear Tri-Town Communities,

We have been working over the past few weeks to deal with the novel coronavirus, COVID-19, and its impact on our community and appreciate your patience as we continue to manage this rapidly changing situation. It is with an abundance of caution that we share the following information relative to school closure in an effort to mitigate the heightened regional risk of cross-contamination from outside the community.

This action, as part of a regional strategy, will be most effective with the help and cooperation of the community. Rather than focusing on swiftly and solely closing our schools – and having our student population in the community without isolation strategies and coordination with other partners – we have been working collectively with other towns and regions to develop a more comprehensive strategy to bring a faster result in keeping more people safe.

School Closure

After managing what the Department of Public Health identified as a low-risk environment in our community over the past weeks, in partnership with the Marion, Mattapoisett and Rochester Board of Health and the towns of Marion, Mattapoisett and Rochester (and as part of a tri-town-wide risk-mitigation strategy) **we have made the decision to close all schools in Marion, Mattapoisett and Rochester for at least a week – starting Monday, March 16th through Friday, March 20th.** This closure includes all student activities. School days will be made up, in the same fashion as snow days, in late June. However, make-up days will not exceed our 185th day of school. Our last day of school will fall on June 24, 2020.

A status update relative to next steps will be distributed to our tri-town communities on Friday, March 20, 2020.

Please know that we have provided guidance below for residents, families, students and families to help in practicing social isolating, monitoring symptoms and avoiding typical student events and large gatherings during this period of closure. This is a tri-town wide public health strategy to reduce community illness; we know you will take our requests seriously.

Previously Scheduled Activities: While we know it is disappointing that activities are not occurring and key activities are postponed while community health is being prioritized. We are working to rescheduled things wherever possible in the coming weeks. We understand that there will be questions about AP classes, college application deadlines and many other special events but we cannot yet answer this at this time.

The MIAA (Massachusetts Interscholastic Athletic Association) has moved spring sports start to the earliest March 30, 2020.

School Employee Information: It is expected that all staff will check work email during this closure to remain informed.

During this closure, the school will be cleaned and disinfected using deeper disinfection equipment. Custodial staff will be asked to report to the school to handle these activities.

In the interest of business continuity, Old Rochester Regional/MA Supt. Union #55 Central Office will be open and the following essential personnel may be called to work during the closure: Principals, Assistant Principals, School Business Administrator, Facilities Director, Receptionist, Accounts Payable Clerk, Payroll Clerk, Human Resources Director, Admn. Asst. to the Superintendent, Admn. Asst. to the Asst. Superintendent, Assistant Superintendent and Superintendent.

Community Health & Prevention: When a new illness is circulating, it's natural for people to ask what they can do to protect themselves and their families. For our community health actions to be effective, we need all community members to do their part by staying at home as much as possible during the school closure. Our best prevention guidance is:

- Practice social isolation- only leaving home as necessary.
- Avoid large social gatherings.
- Cover coughs/sneezes with tissues, or cough/sneeze into the inner elbow.
- Practice good handwashing with soap and water as often as possible.
- Use alcohol-based hand sanitizers ONLY if soap and water are not available.

What We Know About COVID-19: The novel coronavirus (COVID-19) is a strain that is part of a family of coronaviruses which usually cause mild respiratory illnesses, such as the "common cold".

Some coronaviruses have caused more severe illness, such as **Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) and Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS).**

COVID-19 is a disease caused by a new coronavirus that was not previously identified in humans before December 2019.

Quarantine and Isolation: Patients with COVID-19 have had mild to severe respiratory illness with symptoms of fever, cough, and shortness of breath. It can take between 2 to 14 days after a person gets the virus in their body to become (outwardly) ill.

If you think you have been exposed to COVID-19, and develop a fever and symptoms of respiratory illness, such as cough or difficulty breathing, call your healthcare provider immediately. Your healthcare provider can assess whether a test for COVID-19 is required. Depending on your contact and/or travel history, you will be asked to stay home for a period of 14 days from the time you had contact with a positive or presumptive positive person.

During the isolation period, you should not have visitors in the location where you are isolating. If you must share living quarters with another person, then that person will be subject to quarantine as well.

As noted above, we are asking students not to congregate and to remain as isolated as possible within their families as they can, this will assist in slowing the spread of the virus.

Follow-up and Next Steps: This is an unprecedented public health situation that is rapidly changing. Our hope is that if we all work together, we can reduce the spread of this virus, protect our most vulnerable residents and resume normal activities in a week or two.

A status update regarding school closures will be distributed to families and staff on Friday, March 20, 2020.

We will keep you informed as this rapidly evolving public health situation continues.

Thank you for your continued support and patience.

Sincerely,

Douglas R. White, Jr., Superintendent of Schools