



WESTWOOD PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Honoring Tradition, Inspiring Excellence, Shaping the Future

EMILY J. PARKS
Superintendent of Schools

WESTWOOD SCHOOL CLOSURE BEGINNING MARCH 13

March 12, 2020

Dear Members of the Westwood Community,

I am writing to inform you that the District will be closed from Friday, March 13th through Friday March 20th. All extracurricular activities and athletics will also be suspended. Our first priority is the health and safety of our students and staff. In consultation with public health officials and medical professionals, we believe that the decision to close the District is in direct alignment with this responsibility.

We know that children and families rely on schools as a key component of their larger community. Students receive important nutrition, health and social service support from our schools. We are aware of the impact of interrupting these services and are actively planning for the provision of alternatives.

I want to assure you that we have provided all the current information we have about presumptive positive test results for COVID-19 in our community. Our decision today is not the result of one specific issue. We have reflected seriously on the feedback we have received from the community, particularly in the last 24 hours, and have applied our judgement as a leadership team about the most responsible course of action.

This window of time will afford the District leadership team the opportunity to conduct a fuller assessment of the situation and plan and prepare for continued support of our staff, students, and families. We will continue to closely monitor this ever-changing situation, following the guidance of the Westwood Board of Health, the Massachusetts Department of Health, and the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education. Next week, we will reassess to determine if a longer closure is warranted. We will communicate this information to families by mid week. Some of the most important questions we will address include:

- Will the District need to extend the closure of schools beyond March 20th?
- Will the District put into place structures for the continuation of learning remotely?
- How will the District support students and families with special needs?
- How can we best support students' social and emotional needs during a time of disruption and uncertainty?

As you might imagine, we have already been contemplating these questions. We will do our best to provide clarity as soon as possible.

We also expect that families will have a number of other questions that have not been answered in this letter. To that end, the District has created a page on our website with up-to-date information on COVID-19 and steps we are taking to mitigate its effects on our school community. We have posted a prominent link on the [District's main page](#) or you can access the page directly at [this link](#).

The Commissioner of Education has already informed Districts that schools will not be required to make up days due to school closure beyond the 5 additional days already built into the school calendar. Therefore, as a result of this decision, the last day of school this year will be no later than Thursday, June 25th.

Finally, I want to reiterate that all of us in the District appreciate the many parents and staff who have expressed support of the District's actions and decision-making. I understand that this decision will have far ranging implications for the Westwood school community. We have given the decision a great deal of consideration. While the well-being of our students and staff is our first priority, we also know that schools are part of a larger community. We feel strongly that we must heed to Governor's call to all play our part in slowing the spread of this virus and helping to ensure that the capacity of the health care system does not become overtaxed. We believe that this decision is in keeping with our commitment to educating the next generation of Westwood's residents and want to model the civic and collaborative values that make Westwood such a wonderful place to live and learn. Thank you for sharing your children with us and we will continue to make decisions with their health and safety at the forefront of our thinking.

Sincerely,

Emily J. Parks
Superintendent

Anthony M. Mullin
Chair, Westwood School Committee