



Exeter-West Greenwich Regional School District

940 Nooseneck Hill Rd. West Greenwich, RI 02817

401.397.5125 Fax: 401.397.2407

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May 29, 2020

Dear Families,

As we enter the final weeks of distance learning for the 2019-2020 school year, I want to take this opportunity to express my sincere appreciation for all that you have done to make the best of a very challenging situation. I know first-hand the sacrifice it takes to assume responsibility for learning at home while still balancing your own work and life schedules. This has not been easy and it is certainly not ideal, but I see and hear evidence every day that suggests we have accomplished what many thought would be an impossible task. Thank you!

While the current school year begins to wind down, the work to plan for our re-opening in 2020-21 has already begun. This will be perhaps an even greater challenge for our school community, as there remain so many unknowns that will certainly influence, or even dictate, our next moves. However, we cannot and will not wait for all of the answers to begin our planning process. The conversation about re-entry is well under way at the National, State and local levels and we continue to map out "what if" scenarios so that we are prepared for (hopefully) any restriction that may be imposed on us by the State to ensure the health and safety of our students, staff and families. Here is a sampling of the issues we will be required to address as we develop our re-entry plan:

- How do we adhere to crowd-size limitations and social distancing requirements throughout the school day, including lunch/recess times, morning drop-off and dismissal, on school buses, during passing time and in classrooms?
- Are there any necessary modifications to our current facilities to address these issues?
- Will it be necessary to explore blended schooling models, where some (or all) students have scheduled in-school time and at-home learning time?
- What are the additional requirements for cleaning/sanitizing throughout the school day and what are the staffing implications to meet these requirements?
- How will we address the need to screen all individuals entering the school building to ensure that they are safe to interact with others?
- What will the plan be for children and/or staff who have compromised immune systems, or otherwise fall into a "high-risk" category for contracting Covid-19, or any other potentially life-threatening virus?
- How will we address students/staff who begin to display symptoms while at school? What is the protocol for isolating the individual(s) and communicating with the RI Department of Health?
- What are the specific personal protective equipment requirements that will be in place (face masks, gloves, plastic shields, etc.) and how will we ensure that we have access to those needed supplies given the current supply and demand trends?
- How will we allow for students to re-connect with last year's teacher(s) and classmates to provide some degree of closure before beginning in their new classrooms?

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- How will we determine students' current level of academic skills, identify any learning gaps, and provide the necessary supports and intervention required to address those learning needs?
- Are we properly staffed to address the projected increased social-emotional needs (including anxiety) of children at each of our schools?
- What funding will be available to us from the Federal and State levels that will enable us to address all of the above?

As you can imagine, we have a lot to consider and there is no road map for us to follow to get it all right. However, I want to ensure all of you that we are already working diligently to prepare for whatever is necessary to reopen schools as soon as we are able to. At this point, it is too early to have any specific answers since much of what we will be required to do depends on the status of the virus as Rhode Island slowly reopens throughout the summer months.

I will continue to communicate new information as it becomes available throughout the summer. Additionally, we will be sending out some brief surveys that will help us to understand the intentions of our families (For example, are you considering NOT sending your child back to school, even if we are allowed to reopen?) as well as our community's concerns as we move through the planning process.

For now, I wish you well as we wrap up our third month of distance learning. Please enjoy your well-deserved summer break and stay safe and healthy.

Sincerely,



James H. Erinakes, II
Superintendent of Schools

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