



3-13-20

Dear Parent/Guardians:

I am writing to inform you that the Westbrook Public Schools will be closed **until further notice**, beginning at 4:00pm today. At this time, we are prepared to say schools will initially be closed minimally for two weeks. Please be aware that our ongoing guidance updates will keep you apprised of any need to extend our closure time frame.

On the advice of our local health departments, school superintendents in southeastern Connecticut have come together to make a decision to put the health of our communities (both school community and the community at large) at the center of our decisions to close schools. We have been advised by state and local health authorities that the implementation of social distancing measures is a proven science-based intervention that has been shown to reduce the morbidity and mortality associated with communicable disease outbreaks. In the past, communities in which schools were closed as preventative measures were able to positively impact and reduce the spread of disease. We felt compelled to make this decision to prevent the spread of illness among our students, staff, and our communities.

We also clearly heard that we cannot confirm that this illness will run its course in two weeks; in fact, it is not likely that it will. We made the determination to make this closure "indefinite" based on that information. This decision was made in consultation with and with the support of the health departments, elected officials and emergency management professionals.

There has been much discussion about the concept of distance learning during prolonged absences. At this time the Connecticut State Department of Education has discouraged districts from utilizing this approach due to concerns over instructional consistency (especially in the early grades), equity of access both intra-district and inter-district, disruption of special education services, and multiple employee contractual issues. We will continue, during this school closing time frame, to seek ways to provide supplemental education to our students. Should we be able to utilize a distance learning model as we go forward, we will notify parents, students, and staff members of how this will be implemented and when it will be initiated, if at all.

At this time, please be advised that you will be updated on relevant information that is received and vetted from our public health directors, the CDC, and other state officials. Please continue to monitor our district website and email to ensure receipt of the most current information. My next official School Closure Update will come to you by end of day (4:00pm) on Friday, March 20th. Of course, should relevant information be made available sooner, I will update you as needed.

Thank you for your consideration of this important information. As our public health depts. have reminded us, it is important to remain calm and informed.

Sincerely,