

Letter from Superintendent Lisa Brady
Parent/Guardian Update
March 27, 2020

Dear Parents/Guardians,

While our universe is certainly out of kilter and we are all trying to adjust to the “new normal,” our focus remains keeping our school families safe and ensuring that learning continues. This has been hard on everyone - especially students, teachers, and families who miss everything about daily school life as we knew it.

New challenges are emerging every day and expectations for “home learning” are inconsistent because there are no norms for benchmarking a traditional instructional delivery program, and then trying to redesign it as an online experience. Many of us have taken college or professional online courses, but they were designed at their inception to be delivered in an online format. This is simply not true for what we do each day in traditional schools and classrooms, yet our teachers are working diligently to adapt and adjust to keep school “in session”.

We currently have no guidance from the New York State Education Department (SED) regarding grading expectations for “home learning,” and we realize that this is a source of anxiety for students and parents. We believe that this will be forthcoming soon. There are daily discussions among local school district administrators about many of these “unknowns,” but it is impossible to fully vet ideas without direction and confirmation from the State about what they will accept or require. All of this is a source of stress for our kids. Our teachers understand that they need to be flexible and are working with students to help reduce their anxiety. Students or parents who are overwhelmed should reach out to their child’s teacher or counselor for support.

It is important to know that concerns and issues with video conferencing related to privacy and image tampering, on platforms like Zoom and Google Meets, have been raised by National and State Teachers Unions. We need to figure out ways to respect and safeguard these online interactions for teachers and students. I know that there are many parents who are hoping and expecting a “class by class, minute by minute” recreation of a child’s school day by using these kinds of video solutions, but we must address unintended consequences that are emerging. We continue to ask for your patience and understanding as we work through these issues.

We are very pleased to share that we have opened up our childcare program for our community health care workers and first responders under the auspices of the Springhurst Children’s Center. We are there Monday through Friday from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. as required by the Governor’s Executive Order closing schools. The program is open only to children ages 5-12 years whose parents are working in clearly delineated professions and those in need of this support can email me directly at bradyl@dfsd.org.

Beginning on April 6th we will begin our regularly scheduled spring break through April 13th. We sincerely hope that our families, teachers, and staff can take a break from the current school routine and find ways to experience and acknowledge these holidays in meaningful ways. Many of us remain healthy so there is much to be thankful for. There are also members of our community who are ill with COVID-19 and we are keeping all of them in our thoughts as we wish them a full and speedy recovery.

As of today, we have no word on extending the current school closure from either the Governor or the County Executive, but we would expect that this will be forthcoming. For now, our schools will remain closed until after the spring break. I realize that families are trying to figure out long term logistics should schools be closed even longer. What if schools are shut down for the rest of the school year? What happens if schools do not resume until the fall? It is almost unfathomable that this would be the case, however, for the immediate term we simply must focus on our most pressing issues before we can begin planning that far out. Solving the current challenges at hand will have a significant impact on what we do next, but we simply do not have the information or guidance needed from SED to forecast the future.

I will continue to issue updates weekly, or more frequently as needed. These will also be posted on the District website homepage at www.dfsd.org along with additional helpful Coronavirus (COVID-19) information as it becomes available from our health partners and legislators.

I wish you the best possible weekend ahead.

Sincerely,

Lisa Brady, Ed.D.
Superintendent