

March 19, 2020

Dear Deerfield Families,

I have reflected to others that I feel like even Hollywood couldn't have written a script like the one we are currently living in. If you are like me, it feels like we are living in this movie, and we're still waiting for the ending. I am optimistic to hear the many ways our community is supporting each other with phone calls to neighbors, friends offering to pick up groceries or make a meal, volunteers willing to help deliver meals to seniors and so much more. You are the reason Deerfield is a great place for kids to learn and grow.

The past two days brought more changes with tighter restrictions as the state and nation work to contain the coronavirus. While the situation does change rapidly, I would like to compliment Dane County Emergency Management and Public Health Dane County Madison for holding bi-weekly conference calls with school administrators to keep us updated as best they can. I want to assure you that there are many county agencies who are working diligently to keep citizens safe and trying to provide resources as quickly as possible to those in need.

I would like to share updates with you as well as some important messaging that has been passed on from the public health agencies in Dane County. Please continue to check your email for regular updates.

When are students returning to school?

At this time, we are unsure of a return date. Governor Evers has declared that all schools in Wisconsin will be closed until further notice. I continue to be hopeful that we will return this school year, however, please know there is a strong possibility that this might not be possible based on the spread of the virus.

Will the school year be extended?

No. The Department of Public Instruction has confirmed that they will waive the instructional hours requirement for any school district that requests a waiver due to the ongoing public health emergency. We will apply for this waiver which means we will not need to extend our school days or the school year.

Does this mean all spring sports, concerts and other school events are cancelled?

Yes. Sadly, at this time they are cancelled until further notice. Again, I am hopeful that we might return for a portion of the year so that some of these events can still take place.

Are the buildings open to come pick up my child's belongings?

No. Our buildings are not open at this time for materials pick up. Due to the tighter restrictions, we would prefer that families, especially students, stay home the next few weeks during this critical period of containment. We hope to provide dates in April for another materials pick up. If your child needs specific materials or essential personal items before that time, please contact the building principal.

What are the academic expectations for my child during the closure?

As we continue to receive more information regarding student instruction requirements from DPI, we will be sharing our learning plan with families during the week of March 30th. A small group instruction team has been meeting regularly since last week to create a plan that is realistic for families. We are trying to be mindful of many facets such as equal access to internet, parents with daytime work responsibilities, student access to technology devices to complete work, level of difficulty of the work without teacher instruction and guidance, and appropriate amount of time expected for daily academics at each grade level, to name just a few. Our goal is to provide a plan that is reasonable and as equitable as possible under these very challenging circumstances.

What if we do not have a device at home for my child to use for academics?

If your child needs a device, please contact the building principal to make arrangements to check out a device for your child. Students in grades 5-12 have each been issued a Chromebook to keep at home; if they do not have their Chromebook, please contact the building principal.

Will our district be participating in the free lunch program?

Yes. We will be starting this program the week of March 30th. Details regarding the program will be sent out via email at the end of this week. Remember, the meal program is FREE to all students age 18 and under. This program is part of the National School Lunch Program provided by the federal government.

Where can I get help or resources for other needs my family might have?

The Deerfield Community Center is ready to help all Deerfield residents with any needs you may have. Remember, DCC serves all ages so they are well prepared to provide resources or connect residents to other resources including food pantry needs and financial assistance. They can be reached at 764-5935.

We will continue to keep families updated, and we will also be working to keep our website updated to keep you informed. <https://www.deerfield.k12.wi.us/students-families/covid-19-information.cfm>

A final word that the public health agencies have asked us to share with our families--Stay home, if possible, and keep your children home. Do not arrange playdates or other small group gatherings during these next few weeks. Limit trips to stores for only essential items. Wash hands, wash hands, wash hands. If you or someone in your family has flu-like symptoms of a fever, cough or shortness of breath, contact your doctor's office.

Finally, hang in there. This situation has been a rollercoaster of emotions for many, including me. Just as we adjust our thinking to one piece of news, a new piece comes or something gets changed that brings new concerns and questions. It's okay to feel sad, mad, worried, or confused. There is a lot happening all at once. Expect a range of emotions from members of your family, and acknowledge them. Listen to each other, be kind to yourself, and remember, a little humor goes a long way. We'll get through this together.

Sincerely,

Michelle R. Jensen
District Administrator