



# Dedham Public Schools

*Home of America's first tax supported, free public school*

DPS Coronavirus School Closure Information Update

Friday, March 13, 2020

As you most likely know by now, for the health and safety of all faculty, staff, students, and the greater Dedham community, **all Dedham Public Schools will be closed for at least the next two weeks** - from Monday, March 16th through Friday, March 27th. During this time, all Dedham Schools will be thoroughly deep cleaned and disinfected by our dedicated and hard-working custodial/maintenance staff. As the evolution of this pandemic becomes better understood over the next two weeks, we will make a decision to either extend or end the closing of our schools. The most updated information will be continually posted to the [Coronavirus web page on the DPS website](#).

Today's decision comes after a statewide conference call this morning with the Commissioner of Education and the Department of Public Health. In addition, I spent most of the day in comprehensive discussions with our school administrative team, other superintendents, school committee members, and town officials. This decision is also in alignment with the regional response plan that was created today by the superintendents and executive directors of the school districts and special education collaboratives of the Tri-County Roundtable, of which Dedham is a member, to manage this pandemic in all our communities by closing all schools collectively.

Here are some additional important things to know, effective Monday, March 16th, for at least the next two weeks:

## **Student Meals and Food Support**

For any families who are food insecure, the Dedham Food Services Department will be providing breakfast and lunch for ANY Dedham students ages 4-18. Students do NOT need to be eligible for free/reduced lunch to qualify for this opportunity. These meals will be distributed at two different locations in Dedham from 8-11:00 AM Monday through Friday. These locations are:

Avery Elementary School - 336 High Street

Dedham Housing Authority Resource Center - 92 Veterans Road

These meals will be “grab-and-go” style; packaged in convenient carrying bags by our hard-working and talented Food Services Department. More specific information will be forthcoming as this program needs to conform with considerable regulations governed by the Federal School Lunch Program. We are very excited to begin this program on Monday, March 16!

### **Maintaining Educational Gains During Extended School Closure**

District teachers, curriculum coordinators, and department chairs have worked to create engaging activities to maintain learning gains during this unexpected extended school closure. These experiences are set to begin on Wednesday, March 18 and will be provided for all students in Grades K-12. Additional information and details will be available for all faculty on Monday, March 16.

In the interest of ensuring equity for all our students, the Dedham Public Schools will not provide any digital or remote learning opportunities intended to replace in-person teaching during this closure. The intent of this programming is to mitigate the negative impact of this unanticipated break in instruction, not to introduce new content.

### **Previously Scheduled Events & Activities**

As a result of this impending two-week closure, all previously scheduled school sponsored events and activities through Friday, March 27th will be cancelled or postponed. In addition, all rentals of Dedham Public Schools facilities are cancelled and suspended until further notice. Updates on specific events will be posted on our website - and we will communicate any new scheduling as it is available. We do not have answers at this time for those events scheduled after March 27th, but we will continue to evaluate and make decisions as soon as possible, given the information we have.

### **School Building Access In The Next 2 Weeks**

During the next two weeks we realize that some of you may need access to materials left in our school buildings. For the most part, schools will be open if you need to briefly come in and retrieve belongings. Make sure you call the main office of your school before you head out if you need to come in for any reason, just to make sure you can enter and not interfere with deep cleaning activities.

### **Information For School Employees**

The Dedham Public Schools Central Administration Office will remain open during this extended closure and all 12-month district employees are expected to report to work. The following essential personnel should continue to report to work during this extended closure: principals, central office administrative assistants, central office payroll clerks, bookkeeper/accounts payable, central office

administrators, transportation coordinator, central office directors, executive assistant to the superintendent, and technology and digital learning staff as determined by the Directors of Technology and Digital Learning. All District Leadership Team members will be expected to attend a meeting on Monday, 3/16 from 9-11:00 AM. It is expected that all faculty and staff will check their Dedham Public Schools email daily and respond in a timely manner during this extended closure.

I realize that this decision has a serious economic, social and educational impact on our students, staff and families. Thank you for your patience and flexibility in such a challenging time with so many unknowns. In the event a family member needs to pick up personal items, please email your building principal directly. Please do not hesitate to contact me ([mwelch@dedham.k12.ma.us](mailto:mwelch@dedham.k12.ma.us)) to let me know if we can do anything to support the needs of your family. And please visit the [Dedham Public Schools Coronavirus webpage](#) to keep up to date on the latest information available.

All my best,

Mike Welch

Superintendent

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