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March 14: Coronavirus update from Glens Falls City Schools

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A message from Glens Falls City School District

Dear Parents and Guardians:

Yesterday, the New York State Health Department and Governor Cuomo released new information for K-12 schools in light of the coronavirus pandemic, most specifically, the waiving of the 180-day requirement for schools to be in session. Health officials also spoke of increasing precautions and social distancing to slow down the spread of COVID-19, and hopefully prevent a dramatic spike in infections.

In a carefully measured response, Glens Falls City Schools will be closed for five weeks, March 16th through April 19th, as health officials and the district leadership team continue to monitor this evolving situation. This means that all classes, extra-curricular activities, sports practices/competitions, and events will be canceled through the end of April break. To be clear, Glens Falls City School District still does NOT have a confirmed case of COVID-19 in our school community. These measures are being taken in an effort to “flatten the curve” of a potential spike in infections region-wide.

On Monday afternoon, March 16th, students will be allowed to enter the buildings on a limited basis to collect any personal items from their lockers, and to pick up school books and Chromebooks. We intend to allow students in grades 3-6 to take home the Chromebook they use at school for the duration of the closure. Specific details on distribution will be shared with families on a building-by-building basis.

We will be offering breakfast and lunch meals to ALL students during the closure, and will follow up with details on continued meal distribution.

Faculty and staff members will be meeting at school on Monday and Tuesday, March 16 + 17 to discuss plans for supplemental learning and review materials that students and caregivers can use at home. Families should expect to receive more information about staying connected during the closure early next week.

It is important to note that there are practical limits to any type of remote learning. The complete educational program that normally occurs in a classroom simply cannot be replicated in full at home, particularly when a closing involves an entire district over a long period of time. However, we are committed to providing a variety of supplemental resources for students' self-guided learning at home.

We encourage parents, guardians, and caregivers to support children's learning at home during the closure, and direct you to the district website for resources. Individual teachers may communicate with students and families to suggest optional activities to keep brains and bodies moving.

We are all members of the GF Nation school community, and our mission compels us all to “model the behaviors” of being **responsive** rather than **reactionary** during this unusual time. The district leadership team is making its best effort to be **responsive** by:

- Carefully considering the health and safety impacts of holding classes or closing as each affects students, staff, and families. In many ways, our classrooms and buildings are some of the cleanest spaces for students to be during this time, thanks to the exceptional around-the-clock efforts of our custodial staff to disinfect our schools. In many cases, children would need to be watched by grandparents—the very population these closures and cancellations are meant to protect.
- Intently deliberating over the effect on our students and families of losing daily breakfast and meal service in school, and planning multiple possible options to continue providing food during a school shutdown.
- Weighing the drawbacks of a prolonged interruption in our educational program, which could affect students' college or career plans, or their growth and mastery of core subjects. During any closure, our students with special needs or whole-child supports experience a major disruption in their programming.

As parents and guardians, we must be **responsive** rather than **reactionary** by calmly and confidently guiding our children through these evolving COVID-19 circumstances. We recognize that this news will be concerning

to many of our students and families. Adults can be **responsive** to these concerns by doing the following:

- Remain calm and reassuring when talking with your children about the global situation and our local responses. Please read the tips from school psychologists and nurses [here](#).
- Connect with other parents and caregivers in your neighborhood to think about ways to support one another. How can a neighborhood or friendship group use a rotation schedule to provide supervision for children? Is there a knowledgeable neighbor who can help trouble-shoot technology issues that may come up during the school closure?
- Commit to only sharing credible, accurate, and relevant information in conversations, on social media, and in your community. Respect that the situation is changing rapidly, and adults are making decisions based on the best information they have available at the time. Your concerns and precautions may be different than those in your circles. Do not add to fear or stress with unhelpful comments. Instead, rely on the [CDC](#) and [New York State DOH updates](#) for factual information.

State officials continue to emphasize that the general risk to the public is low. The CDC also recommends that older people and people with severe chronic conditions should take special precautions because they are at higher risk of developing serious COVID-19 illness. If you or one of your family members tests positive for COVID-19 during the closure, please contact the district office.

The state Department of Health has a coronavirus hotline. You can call the hotline at 1-888-364-3065 with questions or concerns about travel and symptoms.

It continues to be the district's highest priority to keep students and staff healthy and safe, and we are committed to further communications about our efforts to help prevent the spread of this illness.

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