

Darienite

News for Darien

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Darien Schools to Close for Two Weeks After Early Dismissal Thursday; Separately, Darien Library Announces Closure

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Date : March 11, 2020

Darien schools will close early, at 11 a.m., Thursday, and not reopen until Thursday, March 26, schools Superintendent Alan Addley announced in an email to parents Wednesday night and at a Board of Education meeting the same night.

Separately, Darien Library also announced it will be closed "until further notice," also as a step to prevent spread of COVID-19 in the community.

"Today, the State Department of Health shared that the spread of the Coronavirus is not only imminent but is actively occurring across local communities," Addley wrote. "While no Darien resident has been diagnosed with the Coronavirus, in an abundance of caution, the district is being proactive in its response to close schools in order to prevent the potential spread of the virus."

No academic, athletic or extracurricular activities at all will take place in the schools during the two-week closure—except for deep cleaning Addley wrote, "and school facilities may not be used for any event during the period of closure."

The 10-day closing of schools will bring the school year to June 30, he said. Previously, Addley has said that school closures that would push the school year beyond June 30 will need approval from the state Department of Education.

In his Wednesday night message, he said district officials will be talking with state education officials on Thursday before the district decides whether or not it "meets the criteria to submit a waiver to have eLearning days count towards the 180 days of school" required by state law. "We will advise you of the decision," he told parents and teachers.

"As we learn more over the next several days, the Board of Education may be required to use some or all of the April break to make-up missed days," Addley wrote. "We will keep you apprised of how we intend to make up the days and reschedule meetings and activities."

Nonrequired learning activities will be made accessible to students online during the closure, Addley wrote: "These activities are completely voluntary and students are not required to participate. The activities are not intended to replace classroom instruction. Our goal is to offer opportunities for students to access enrichment, practice skills, and have structure to the day."

It was unclear from Addley's message whether or not the enrichment activities he described for the school closure period are part of, all of or different from the district's "eLearning Program" that educators had been developing for school closure.

School districts in New Canaan, Wilton and Weston all announced Wednesday that they were closing after stating that some students had been in contact with adults who were found to have COVID-19. Darien's school closures come despite not having reports of such contacts where COVID-19 might have been transmitted.

Full Text of the Darien Library Announcement

This announcement was emailed in a news release at 9:03 p.m.:

Darien Library is closed until further notice due to the coronavirus outbreak.

The outdoor book drop will not be accepting returns, so patrons are asked to hold onto their items until Darien Library opens again.

No fines will be incurred during this time. Tax-Aide appointments are cancelled while Darien Library is closed.

Full Text of Addley's Announcement

March 11, 2020

Dear Families and Staff,

Earlier this evening you received notification that the Darien Public Schools is closing for 14 calendar days, beginning tomorrow, Thursday, March 12. The scheduled date of return to school is Thursday, March 26. We will communicate with you throughout the period of closure as we learn more information.

The closure includes the cancellation of all academic, athletic, and extracurricular activities. District and school facilities may not be used for any event during the period of closure. All schools and facilities will be thoroughly deep cleaned while closed.

This decision to close schools was made late today in consultation with the First Selectman and town and school health officials. Today, the State Department of Health shared that the spread of the Coronavirus is not only imminent but is actively occurring across local communities. While no Darien resident has been diagnosed with the Coronavirus, in an abundance of caution, the district is being proactive in its response to close schools in order to prevent the potential spread of the virus.

Presently, with one snow day and 10 days of closure due to the Coronavirus, the last day of school would be scheduled for June 30. As we learn more over the next several days, the Board of Education may be required to use some or all of the April break to make-up missed days. We will keep you apprised of how we intend to make up the days and reschedule meetings and activities.

Our dedicated and talented staff has worked tirelessly over the past weeks to create enrichment experiences that all students will be able to access while schools are closed.

Resources are accessible for all students in both general and special education. You will receive a separate communication with instructions on how to access these materials, which will be available through our website or Google Classroom beginning on Monday March 13.

These activities are completely voluntary and students are not required to participate. The activities are not intended to replace classroom instruction. Our goal is to offer opportunities for students to access enrichment, practice skills, and have structure to the day.

Schools will be open for students and staff tomorrow from 8:30 to 11 a.m. During this time, students in Grades 3 and 4, who do not have a device at home, may sign-out a Chromebook at the main office for use during this closure and other students may stop in briefly to pick up any items (i.e., Chromebooks and musical instruments) that they may have left behind.

We understand that school closure affects all families, and we are committed to addressing the needs of all

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our learners. Our administrators will reach out to individual families in the days ahead to explain the process we will use to provide services to their children once school reopens.

Tomorrow, after consultation with the Connecticut Commissioner of Education, the District will decide whether or not it meets the criteria to submit a waiver to have eLearning days count towards the 180 days of school. We will advise you of the decision.

We appreciate your patience and understanding during this difficult time. Take care of yourselves during this time and follow the health guidance and recommendations shared with you in previous communications. In particular, we ask parents and students to be mindful of the guidance to avoid activities involving large gatherings.

Thank you for your understanding and collaboration as we make decisions for the health and safety of our students. Together we will successfully navigate these turbulent and uncertain times. My apologies for the late notice.

Sincerely,
Alan Addley, Ed.D.
Superintendent of Schools