

From: Francis W. Parker Charter Essential School
Sent On: 03-13-2020 20:34:09
Subject: COVID-19 Update

Dear Parker Students and Families,

As the COVID-19 pandemic unfolds in Massachusetts, schools are grappling with public health questions while seeking ways for students to keep learning and making academic progress. Because the COVID-19 situation is dynamic, Parker will be making decisions about whether or not to hold classes on campus on a week-by-week basis. In consultation with our local board of health, we will NOT hold classes or activities on campus during the weeks of March 16 and March 23: this step is proactive risk management and mitigation (social distancing); to our knowledge there are no known cases of COVID-19 in the Parker community at present. Nonetheless, during these next two weeks, the school grounds will be closed to students – there will be no classes, sports practices, play rehearsals, and other extracurricular activities of any kind.

Closing schools, theaters, and event venues are part of a broader effort to prevent community spread of this virus. If students and families continue to meet together in groups outside of school, school closure will not have the desired impact for the Parker community. It is important that students and families refrain from meeting in groups and that we all practice social distancing as recommended by the CDC.

Despite this social distancing, we want to encourage our students to feel connected to Parker and their learning. We hope they'll continue learning and making academic progress at home: we know this is especially important for students who have plans to graduate or Gateway this spring. Teachers have spent the day today modifying planned curriculum and assessment for students to work on independently next week: on Monday we will distribute a centralized email to all students and parents/guardians with links to a week of learning activities, instructions from teachers, and other needed resources. Teachers and advisors—who will likely be working from home—will communicate directly with students (using students' Parker email addresses) to encourage and support engagement with these materials. We will continue to use email as a primary communication tool, and we ask all students to be sure to check their Parker email regularly. Next week, we will also share information about how families without access to internet or home computers can obtain these important tools from the school, if needed.

I'm so grateful for the good questions and ideas offered by community members these past days, and I hope folks continue to reach out with same. I particularly hope community members will inform school nurse, Lisa Zick (lzick@theparkerschool.org), should they be diagnosed, presumed positive, or be exposed to COVID-19. All students returning from any international travel or domestic areas of impact should self-quarantine for fourteen days before returning to school. If families are currently enrolled in the free or reduced lunch program or are experiencing food insecurity that will be exacerbated by school closure, please contact Michelle McKenna (mmckenna@theparkerschool.org). The COVID-19 situation is stressful for staff, students, and families; for emotional and mental health questions, please contact school counselor, Sheila Kelly (skelly@theparkerschool.org).

During this closure, it will be our goal to remain in communication with you via email at least once a week, and more frequently as needed. Current events are changing rapidly and there are many unknowns at this time. We know that transparency and clarity are especially important during times like this: as we have answers to your many questions about school and student learning, we will share those answers. Please know that we're grateful for your collaboration as we move through these challenging times together.

Be safe and well.

--Todd (tsumner@theparkerschool.org)