March 12, 2020

Dear Morrisville Parents/Guardians, Staff and Community:

What is going on outside of our schools is changing rapidly. It seems that closures of schools and universities are coming in by the droves. As of yesterday, the World Health Organization has declared COVID-19 a pandemic. Also, the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) released its Implementation of Community Mitigation Strategy. President Trump has suspended travel to most of Europe, effective Friday. Please be assured that as a District, we are paying attention to these actions, and while we are hoping for the best outcome, we are preparing for the worst. Please take a minute to review this document in its entirety.

While “community spread” of the coronavirus may not have entered Bucks County borders yet, it’s only a matter of time. So, staying ahead of things is paramount to the health of everyone in our community. So what should you and I be thinking about as an objective and strategy to protect students, faculty and staff and other loved ones at home? Please visit our website, www.mv.org of visit our Facebook page to view the latest information about COVID-19.

Superintendents in Bucks County have been discussing how best to enact the strategies as suggested by CDC. While many of them are broad in their scope, they have different meanings in a local context. It is clear from our countywide discussion, that each superintendent has their own community variables that will shape their decision. That is certainly the case with our district. For Morrisville, we will enact the following restrictions, in order to mitigate the potential spread of COVID-19.

**All field trips, non-essential evening events, non-essential travel, as well as visits to our campus are cancelled. These restrictions will be in effect starting tomorrow, March 13, until April 14, 2020.**

This does not impact our 21st Century Learning Centers. All afterschool programming for 21CCLC will continue as planned.

We will evaluate future events on a weekly basis, based on available information. Please be prepared for additional cancellations and/or postponements. Additionally, we will continue to use enhanced cleaning procedures, and to provide updates as often as possible, when the information impacts our District directly. Please note that PIAA Athletic participation been discussed, and we will follow PIAA’s guidelines about interscholastic travel and competition to sporting events. As of this writing, PIAA has postponed their Basketball and AA Stimming Championships.
Many of you have asked me if we will transition to online schooling, in the event of a closing. While that is a great idea, there are many variables that must be considered. What concerns me greatly with offering an online/distance education model is the limitations presented by such a model to provide a Free and Appropriate Public Education to ALL Morrisville students. Besides a legal issue, it’s an excellence and equity issue. The legal issue is our obligation to meet the provisions of the Individual Education Plan of more than 230 students every day in our classrooms. For many of them, providing the required supports and accommodations remotely would be near impossible. We also have 67 percent of our population - about 700 students - that live in poverty. While many in Morrisville can access a computer tomorrow, some students do not have Internet access at home. Another challenge is meeting the needs and requirements of our 50 English Language Learners. The excellence issue goes without saying, but I will say it anyway. There is nothing that replaces a highly qualified and instructionally prepared teacher in front of your student(s) everyday! In addition, PDE has not yet provided any guidance that would allow us to substitute eLearning during a shutdown for our required 180 days of instruction, so missed days would have to be made up anyway.

What we have been doing, in conjunction with our principals and department coordinators, is preparing our teachers for the possibility of a medium or long-term closure by preparing content that can be distributed to students so that they can continue some level of learning while at home. Logistically, we are working through scenarios to distribute the content both electronically and in hard copy format. This is a work in progress that we hope will not have to come to fruition.

I realize there is great anxiety in our community about what may happen next. I ask that you stay calm, stay informed, and stay tuned to what is happening around us. We are here to help where we can, and our team is appreciative of your support and concern for the children of Morrisville.

Sincerely,

Jason B. Harris
Superintendent of Schools

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