March 16, 2020

Dear Parents, Guardians and Caregivers,

As you are aware, Gateway Regional School District has taken preemptive measures to close schools through April 7, 2020 in response to the Governors order regarding the unprecedented situation created by the spread of COVID-19 (Coronavirus). I want to stress that there are currently no presumptive or confirmed cases of COVID-19 within our Gateway community. We hope that our district and greater Gateway community remain protected during this time.

These are extraordinary times and the information and guidance from local, state and federal authorities has resulted in decisions and actions that need to be nimble to adapt to the quickly changing environment. Please see the guidelines issued by the Office of Special Education Programming: OSEP Guidance issued March 2020. At this time, the following district guidelines are in effect.

**New Referrals/Initial Eligibility:**
Gateway, along with other schools in the commonwealth, will freeze evaluation, referral, and plan distribution timelines for all students in a referral cycle during school closure. This means that as soon as schools open again, the timelines will commence as is required by state and federal regulations.

**Annual Reviews/Evaluations in Process:**
Gateway, along with other schools in the commonwealth, will freeze evaluation, referral, annual review, and plan distribution timelines for all students on IEPs and 504s during school closure. This means that as soon as schools open again, the timelines will commence as is required by state and federal regulations.

Additionally, at that time we will be working with families to understand the impact of the closure on students.

**Home/Hospital Tutoring:**
Home and Hospital Tutoring occurs outside of the school buildings, and as such, parents/guardians/caregivers can decide whether or not they will allow tutoring staff into their homes. As a practice, Gateway does not provide tutoring when school is not in session. For students currently on approved home or hospital tutoring, the Director of Pupil Services will contact the family to ensure appropriate continuity of education, understanding that our ability to send staff or contracted service providers into homes is contingent upon their perceived health and wellness in accordance with state and CDC guidelines.

**OOD/Residential Placements:**
For students in Out-of-District day or residential placements, Gateway will follow the attendance
recommendations of the individual school or facility.

365 Day Residential Placement

For students in 365 day residential placements, Gateway will follow the attendance recommendations of the individual school or facility. If the 365 day residential school decides to close, decisions will be made on a case by case basis, understanding that our ability to send staff or contracted service providers into homes is contingent upon their perceived health and wellness in accordance with CDC guidelines.

Counseling School Based

If your child is in crisis, whereas they are a threat to themselves or others, you should call 911. If your child is seeing a Clinician, as part of our in-school outpatient counseling service, their services will continue as planned when school is in session. During times of school closure, School Counselors will reach out to families in order to offer support remotely, via phone or computer if there is digital access.

As always, if you feel that your child would benefit from outpatient mental health services we encourage you to communicate directly with your school based counselor for guidance and support and to make a referral as necessary. School based Clinicians will respond to communications via phone or email at their earliest convenience.

Chester: Joyce Hanousek 413-685-4158 jhanousek@grsd.org
Littleville: Elizabeth McCormick 413-685-1339 emccormick@grsd.org
Middle/High: Nancy Blume 413-685-1210 nblume@grsd.org
Julia Goncalves 413-685-1207 jgoncalves@grsd.org
High School Guidance: Emily Johnson 413-685-1108 ejohnson@grsd.org
William Romani 413-685-1110 wromani@grsd.org

Attendance

Given the current circumstances, a note from a parent indicating a child is sick will result in an excused absence, and these absences will be exempt from the Pupil Absence Notification regulation per M.G.L. c. 76, s. 1B and Gateway Regional School District Attendance Policy #10.

OOD Transportation

At this time, our transportation companies have indicated they will continue to transport students to out of district schools that remain open.

Other Important Information:

- Teaching staff: provided enrichment activities to students and families. Resources were shared electronically, and some in hard copy for families that do not have internet access. This will occur on-going throughout the school closure.
- Related service providers (OT, PT, and Speech): shared enrichment resources with specific families and will be in weekly contact to support IEP goals and objectives
- Clinicians (school psychs, guidance, SACs): shared resources with students, families, and staff. They will be emailing and/or phoning their students and families on-going to maintain contact.
- BCBAs are connecting with teachers to offer support, as well as families to update and revise any behavioral plans, safety plans or discrete trial plans.
- Lunch: being provided daily as drive up Grab n Go at all schools between the hours of 11 and 1. Sites include outside of Chester Gym and Outside bus drop circle between Littleville and Main Complex.
- Meds: Nurses are connecting with all families that have student medication on site to coordinate parent pickup.
- Leadership Team and Secretaries are working remotely. Individualized work plans are being
crafted by Pupil Services in conjunction with special education faculty, Paraprofessionals and all Related Services professionals. Despite the fact that school is closed, everyone will be working and are available to support your students remotely. At this time, Central Office will remain open Tuesdays 9a-11a.

- In addition to on-going support of your students and various "Enrichment Activities", staff will be participating in digital professional development throughout the closure to ensure we stay current with best practice.

We are in constant communication with our liaisons at both the state and federal level, and will communicate any updates as a district and department in a timely manner.

Take good care,

Kurt Garivaltis  MS, MPA
Director of Pupil Services
Gateway Regional School District