

March 25, 2020

Dear SOMSD Staff & Family,

I hope that this correspondence finds you, your families, and your loved ones (both near and far) safe and healthy. Thank you for your continued patience and support as we work together as a community to keep everyone safe. I appreciate your efforts at home in helping provide our students with a continuity of education during this closure period.

**School Closure Update:**

On Friday, March 13, 2020, as you know, we closed all schools in order to protect the health and wellness of our students, our staff, and their families. We wanted to do our part in the nationwide movement to exercise the practice of “Social Distancing” to limit the transmission of the COVID-19 virus. The following week, Governor Murphy issued an executive order mandating that all NJ public, private, and parochial preschool programs and elementary and secondary schools, including charter and renaissance schools, would close by Wednesday, March 18, 2020, and would remain closed as long as the order stood.

With Governor Murphy’s executive order still in effect, South Orange & Maplewood School District has extended its distance learning **through Friday, April 17, 2020, with students tentatively returning to school on Monday, April 20, 2020.** As we share often, this is a fluid situation, and we continue to partner with the Governor’s Office, the NJ Department of Education, local health agencies, and our educational leaders to ensure that our future plans meet the needs of our greater community. We believe the extension of distance learning through April 17 is a realistic and logical adjustment that is aligned with the recent steps taken by our Governor for the protection of our citizens.

Since our distance learning period began on March 18 and was tentatively slated to last two weeks, this extension will formally begin on Wednesday, April 1 (as a reminder, the first two days of school closures, March 16 & 17, utilized the District’s unused calendar-embedded emergency school closure dates). As we continue distance learning into April, we will move into our normally scheduled Spring Break from April 10 – 20. During this break, we will provide optional high-quality supplemental instructional enrichment opportunities for our students/families to engage with if they wish.

This new arrangement will provide our administrators and staff with an opportunity to take a deep breath and prepare (we hope) to return to our normal operations. The District will be sending a more detailed communication providing additional guidance on the continuation of our distance learning platform to our families via email by end of day tomorrow, Thursday, March 26.

I would also like to remind you that we have a district “Coronavirus Updates” webpage dedicated to our communications on this matter: [www.somds.k12.nj.us/coronavirusupdates](http://www.somds.k12.nj.us/coronavirusupdates). This page includes resources that can support your student (and family’s) mental health needs during this time of uncertainty. We are keeping the needs of ‘the whole child’ at the forefront as we move forward together. We thank you again for your partnership. Be safe and well.

Sincerely,

Dr. Ronald G. Taylor, Superintendent of Schools