

Gardner Public Schools

Dr. Mark J. Pellegrino, *Superintendent*



www.gardnerk12.org

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December 15, 2020

Dear Gardner School Community,

Unfortunately, cases of COVID-19 have increased greatly in our state and local community. To date, we have had a total of fifteen individuals who had tested positive for the Coronavirus and were in one of our schools during their contagious period. None of these cases have resulted in a transmission in school. This is due to the diligence of our entire school community in following our safety protocols.

However, as the holiday season is upon us, we are expecting a surge in the number of cases in our community, state, and throughout the country. I have had families and staff members request that the schools be entirely remote on December 21st and 22nd to allow their families time to quarantine before visiting loved ones over the holidays to protect extended family members—especially those at high risk. In addition, I have over twenty staff and several families that are going away for the holidays, who will need to quarantine after the break. This will bring the number of staff available to teach to a critically low number. In addition, I am concerned about families traveling, and not quarantining when they return because they do not realize they need to do so even if they are not showing symptoms.

My options are:

1. Avoid the increased risk of in school transmission during a surge of COVID-19 cases by replacing eight days of in-person learning for eight days of remote instruction. On the other hand, this does allow for travel and visiting family during the holidays.
2. Risk school transmissions and increased school quarantines (which is what makes us close large numbers of classes) by keeping the eight days of in-person hybrid instruction. This option does not allow for families to get together safely, reduces my available teaching staff, and does not account for families who travel and do not quarantine.

I believe that now is the time to be cautious, so we do not risk an outbreak in our schools. Now is the time to be understanding and supportive, so families can get together safely during the holiday season. To that end, ***Gardner Public Schools will conduct remote learning only for all students in the district from Monday, December 21, 2020, until Wednesday, January 13, 2021.*** Classes will remotely follow the current hybrid schedule during this period. We will return to in-person instruction in our Hybrid Model starting on Thursday, January 14, 2021.

I realize this poses a hardship for many families. My apologies for the inconvenience this causes. However, as I have said from the beginning, safety comes first. Please call my office if you have any questions or concerns. Thank you for understanding, and I hope you and yours have a safe, healthy, and fulfilling holiday season.

Sincerely,

Mark J. Pellegrino, Ed.D.