



## **Franklin Public Schools**

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### **Superintendent's Report to School Committee March 10, 2020 School Committee Meeting**

#### **Coronavirus Update**

*I wish to emphasize a few points from a recent (March 10, 2020) communication about Coronavirus and add a few additional thoughts.*

#### **Cleaning Procedures**

In addition to our routine cleaning, our custodians have augmented with a disinfecting/sanitizing procedure. The custodians utilize Victory brand electrostatic sprayers, applying a Purell professional surface disinfectant to hard surfaces, commonly touched items such as doorknobs, handles, and counters, and high traffic spaces such as the main and nurses' offices. They began using these sprayers last year when we had a spike in the seasonal flu. They have been using these several times a week including before and after weekend events in our schools.

Hand sanitizing stations are located throughout all of our schools; custodial staff are monitoring them to be sure they are full and operational. Additionally, our faculty and staff are emphasizing good handwashing practices, especially with our elementary students.

We have also asked our transportation company to increase its cleaning procedures. They have added the application of BruTab 6S to their cleaning routine. They are applying the product twice weekly in addition to daily cleaning. Our school-owned vans are also cleaned daily and a disinfecting electrostatic sprayer is used regularly.

In addition to regular use, the disinfecting procedures will be used in response to specific situations, if needed.

#### **Evening Events and Gatherings**

We remain informed and are following guidance about group events. We are also consulting with our local health department officials.

The music concerts scheduled for this (March 10, 2020) evening and Thursday night will continue as planned. We feel it is important to provide our students with continuity of their curriculum in this content area and public performances are an important extension of the school learning environment. We understand that this may be of concern to some families.

Governor Baker's press conference from March 10, 2020 identified that individuals may wish to exercise personal judgement in not attending large gatherings. This message has been emphasized for those who are at-risk including older individuals, those who are immune-compromised, or those who have immune-compromised individuals in their household. We also ask that if you are exhibiting upper respiratory symptoms or flu-like conditions, that you also refrain from attending.

We respect that individuals may make personal decisions to not attend the performances. If families choose to keep a child or children home from participating in this event, there will not be negative consequences for them.

### **A Few Common Topics: Distance learning and Providing Support to Food Insecure Families**

- Telelearning or the use of so-called "blizzard bags" is not a viable option should school close for an extended period of time. DESE is concerned about equity of access, based on information they received from pilot districts over the past few winters.
  - At 4 PM on March 10, 2020, DESE issued updated guidance relaxing some of the 180-day requirement as well as calculations of absenteeism and its impact on the "chronic absenteeism" designation in the MCAS accountability system. The revised requirements can be found here: <http://www.doe.mass.edu/sfs/emergencyplan/covid19.html>
- School closings. Many may wonder why we aren't doing more to close schools. In addition to lost instructional time that may not be necessary, it could be a real hardship for working families when it comes to things like lost wages. One other area of concern that we are thinking about is our food insecure families. Schools provide many services in addition to instruction over the typical school day. One is school lunch. As part of our planning efforts we are considering how we might be able to continue. As it is a federal program, we are remaining informed about their guidance. We are keeping informed of what is happening in other states. We will also seek to connect with the Franklin Food Pantry to support our students and their families. If needed, we will close school but it is a complicated decision.

Earlier today the Governor declared a state of emergency. The important point here is that by doing so, he has created flexibility for the state in securing additional resources and funding.

For reference, I am sharing the Town of Franklin's Coronavirus portal, where the public can access the latest information: <https://www.franklinma.gov/health-department/urgent-alerts/corona-virus-information-portal>

### **Update on Kennedy Visitor**

Earlier this evening, FPS and FPD issued statements about an unknown male who gained entry into the Kennedy School. That individual came forward quickly identifying himself after the social media posts from

today. We wish to assure the community that this was a misunderstanding where someone was seeking to pick up a child at a different Kennedy school in a different district, but was mistakenly in Franklin.

While there was no interaction with our students and our children were safe the entire time, this has been a good reminder of our security and safety procedures. A very positive thing that emerged is that staff didn't recognize the individual and responded appropriately by intervening and seeking assistance. One measure of improvement is that we appeal to those in our community not to allow strangers into our buildings and/or not allowing people in behind you. This will assist us in maintaining our security protocols by enforcing key fob access or with visitors being "buzzed in" by staff. We apologize for the alarm this has raised in the community. Please be assured that the safety of your children is paramount to us.

### **Congratulations to our Winter Athletes**

We want to extend our congratulations to our winter athletes who had such a successful season. It was a busy weekend with cheerleading, girls and boys basketball, and hockey post season play. We wish our cheerleaders well in their upcoming tournament and we are rooting for the Panthers tonight as the girls basketball team plays this evening. [Update -- the girls' basketball team won and will proceed to the State Championship on Saturday -- Go Panthers!]

### **Guest Reading at Oak St. Elementary School**

A number of us at the central office, as well as several key community partners including from our police and fire departments, as well as Representative Roy, participated in a guest reading experience at Oak St. Elementary School for Dr. Seuss' birthday. The students are always excited to have guests into their classrooms and modeling a love for reading. I want to thank literacy specialist Tracie O'Brien for coordinating this meaningful event.

### **Franklin Cultural District Partner Event**

The Franklin High School music department, in collaboration with [Live Arts](#), was recently granted funding from the Massachusetts Cultural Council and the Franklin Cultural District to host a phenomenal string duo. A brother/sister team of Ilana and Eric Zaks performed as part of the Live Arts concert series. Eleven of our FHS orchestra students were able to attend this recital and were amazed by the talents of these young musicians. Upon our return from February break, those students could not stop talking about their experience. FHS hosted a personal performance at FHS on Monday, March 2nd. Part of this performance included a learning studio where several FHS students received coaching and instruction from the duo in front of their classmates!