



April 18, 2020

Dear Garrison Community:

As you may be aware Governor Cuomo has announced school closures to, at least, May 18. Although we maintain some hope that children may be back in school this year, we should prepare for an extended closure. Please also be aware that the district will be open-minded regarding your comfort level with how and when your child returns to school. We recognize that you may have questions given the uncertainty, especially in the event students do not return this year. The school administration will host a webinar on April 27 to share their perspectives and to answer your questions. An invite is forthcoming.

Yes, it has been a trying time; trying our patience, our self-control, while maintaining an even keel. Evening the keel is what we recommend and what the District is working toward. One way to achieve balance is communication. Reach out to one another, stay positive and structured, and reserve time to break down a bit. It is grief we feel now and dealing with our grief is both a private and public experience. We should be mindful of that. We should also be mindful that the fallout from this crisis does not impact all of us equally. Try to encourage each other to keep this experience and whatever further difficulties come in perspective.

We have survived this first month by adjusting to a new normal. And if we can do one month, we can do another. As the economic and psychological pressures to reopen schools mount, it is important to remember why social distancing is so important: We are saving lives. We can't thank enough the essential workers who have stepped up to address this crisis. And we can't thank enough those employees of GUFFS who provide childcare to the children of these workers. Their selflessness and our shared responsibility to maintain social distancing protocols has kept this pandemic in check.

Even though the school is not in session, education continues. It was not an easy task to flip instruction from in-person to remote. And it is hard for parents to adjust to the reality that children, especially younger ones, need adult supervision when they learn. We are grateful for the teachers and parents who are attempting to partner to keep their children's education moving forward. It is not perfect, and it will never be. But every week we can improve our creativity, patience, and collaboration to make this particular method of education more impactful. But as Dr. Jackson, Mr. Levine, and the teachers have emphasized, it is very important to care first for your family's physical and psychological well-being. Contact your teachers and guidance and other parents when you need support and flexibility. Rest assured that each and every member of our

community recognizes this is an extraordinary situation, and adjusting our expectations and priorities is reasonable and sensible.

Although supporting the employees and community remains our foremost concern, the Board is finalizing our search for a new Superintendent. Now more than ever, securing an experienced, knowledgeable, creative and hard-working leader is paramount to bridging the work that this administration and staff have achieved. We look toward a curricular leader (equal emphasis on both of those terms), but one who can also continue to facilitate the design phase of construction project we have embarked on, someone who can provide guidance to employees on how to cope with the crisis, and someone who can help redefine our mission and vision and build a strategic plan for the future of GUFFS. We hope to have an announcement soon.

Meanwhile, our committees are gearing up to address the work that has been sidelined with an eye for reengagement over the coming months and preparing for the fall which will present social-emotional, academic, and budgetary challenges. Although we find ourselves refiguring how and when we meet our goals, the Board is committed to seeing these goals to fruition.

Again, stay connected. Reach out to our school leaders and staff if you need assistance and guidance. Please take the time to review the e-learning program on our webpage under GUFFS NEWS <https://sites.google.com/gufs.org/e-learning/home> for further details regarding the education your children are engaging. Share your thoughts and concerns, but please be realistic and understanding as the families of our employees may be experiencing the same uncertainties and concerns that you are.

Sincerely,

Dr. Debra Jackson, Interim Superintendent;

James Hoch, Board President; Courtney McCarthy, Vice-President;

Jocelyn Apicello, David Gelber, Jill Corson Lake, Matthew Speiser, Sarah Tormey;

Trustees of the Garrison Union Free School District