



OLD COLONY

REGIONAL VOCATIONAL TECHNICAL HIGH SCHOOL DISTRICT
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March 13, 2020

Dear Old Colony Community,

We have been working over the past few weeks to deal with the novel coronavirus, COVID-19, and its impact on our community and appreciate your patience as we continue to manage this rapidly changing situation. It is with an abundance of caution that we share the following information relative to school closure in an effort to mitigate the heightened regional risk of cross-contamination from outside the community.

This action, as part of a regional strategy, will be most effective with the help and cooperation of the community. Rather than focusing on swiftly and solely closing our schools—and having our student population in the community without isolation strategies and coordination with other partners – we have been working collectively with other towns and regions to develop a more comprehensive strategy to bring a faster result in keeping more people safe.

School Closure

After managing what the Department of Public Health identified as a low-risk environment in our community over the past weeks, in partnership with the Rochester Board of Health and the Town of Rochester (and as part of a town-wide risk-mitigation strategy) **we have made the decision to close Old Colony Regional Vocational Technical High School for at least a week—starting Monday , March 16th, through Friday, March 20th.** This closure includes all student activities. School days will be made up, in the same fashion as snow days, in late June. However, make-up days will not exceed our 185th day of school. Our last day of school will fall on June 19, 2020.

A status update relative to next steps will be distributed to our Old Colony community on Friday, March 20, 2020.

Please know that we have provided guidance below for residents, families and students, and staff to help in practicing social isolating, monitoring symptoms, and avoiding typical student events and large gatherings during this period of closure. The intent is to isolate

and therein calm the spread of the virus. If you do not assist us in this manner, we may be staying out of school for no effective result. This is town-wide public health strategy to reduce community illness, please take our requests seriously.

Previously Scheduled Activities: While we know it is disappointing that activities are not occurring and key activities are postponed while community health is being prioritized. We are working to reschedule things wherever possible in the coming weeks. We understand that there will be questions about AP classes, college application deadlines, prom and other special events but we cannot yet answer this at this time.

The MIAA (Massachusetts Interscholastic Athletic Association) has moved spring sports start to the earliest March 30, 2020.

School Employee Information

It is expected that all staff will check work email during this closure to remain informed.

During this closure, the school will be cleaned and disinfected using deeper disinfection equipment. Custodial staff will be asked to report to the school to handle these activities.

In the interest of business continuity, Old Colony Central Office will be open and the following essential personnel may be called to work during the closure: Principal, Business Manager, Facilities Director, Custodial and Maintenance Staff, Accounts Payable Assistant, Payroll Assistant, Assistant to the Business Manager, Assistant to the Principal, Assistant to the Superintendent, Director of Student Services, and Director of Technology.

Community Health & Prevention

When a new illness is circulating, it's natural for people to ask what they can do to protect themselves and their families. For our community health actions to be effective, we need all community members to do their part by staying at home as much as possible during the school closure. Our best prevention guidance is:

- Practice social isolation—only leaving home as necessary
- Avoid large social gatherings
- Cover coughs/sneezes with tissues, or cough/sneeze into the inner elbow.
- Practice good [handwashing](#) with soap and water as often as possible
- Use alcohol-based hand sanitizers ONLY if soap and water are not available.

What We Know About COVID-19: The novel coronavirus (COVID-19) is a strain that is part of a large family of coronaviruses which usually cause mild respiratory illnesses, such as the 'common cold'.

Some coronaviruses have caused more severe illness, such as [Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome \(SARS\)](#) and [Middle East Respiratory Syndrome \(MERS\)](#).

COVID-19 is a disease caused by a new coronavirus that was not previously identified in humans before December 2019.

Quarantine and Isolation: Patients with COVID-19 have had mild to severe respiratory illness with symptoms of fever, cough, and shortness of breath. *It can take between 2 to 14 days after a person gets the virus in their body to become (outwardly) ill.*

If you think you have been exposed to COVID-19, and develop a fever and symptoms of respiratory illness, such as cough or difficulty breathing, call your healthcare provider immediately. Your healthcare provider can assess whether a test for COVID-19 is required. Depending on your contact and/or travel history, you will be asked to stay home for a period of 14 days from the time you had contact with a positive or presumptive positive person.

During the isolation period, you should not have visitors in the location where you are isolating. If you must share living quarters with another person, then that person will be subject to quarantine as well.

As noted above, we are asking students not to congregate and to remain as isolated as possible within their families as they can so assist in slowing the virus spread.

Follow-up and Next Steps

This is an unprecedented public health situation that is rapidly changing. Our hope is that if we all work together, we can reduce the spread of this virus, protect our most vulnerable residents, and resume normal activities in a week or two.

A status update regarding school closures will be distributed to families on Friday, March 20, 2020.

We will keep you informed of any additional changes in operation as this rapidly evolving public health situation continues.

Thank you for your continued support and patience.

Sincerely,



Aaron L. Polansky, Superintendent-Director
Old Colony Regional Vocational Technical High School