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Dear Parents, Staff, and Students of the Enfield Public Schools,

I would like to take the opportunity to address what I know is on everyone's mind: the recent outbreak of the COVID-19 and the preparations we are taking as a district to address this crisis. Let me start by saying that I am a parent of school-age daughters, so I understand the anxiety this situation has caused for parents and students. I want to assure everyone that the safety and well-being of our students and staff is our highest priority, and any decision I make is with this in mind. The Town Manager and I meet on a weekly basis, but speak multiple times a day with our local Director of Public Health, as well as the Enfield Emergency Management Team. In addition to these ongoing meetings, the Town Manager and I have also participated in several state-level communications with Governor Lamont, the Commissioner of Education, and the Connecticut Public Health Director, as well as the Commissioners of Public Safety and Emergency Management. As information on COVID-19 changes rapidly, we have established a communication plan to ensure enactment of any precautions needed to address the Enfield community, and we have both pledged our commitment to exhaust any resource necessary to help contain the spread of this virus.

I would like to remind parents of the efforts that have been underway in recent weeks regarding the cleaning and disinfecting of our schools. Our custodial staff cleans all high traffic areas daily with approved disinfectants (i.e. desktops, door handles, light switches, etc.). When school is not in session, custodians are extra vigilant in cleaning and disinfecting every area possible in our schools and public buildings. This cleaning protocol will continue for the remainder of the school year.

As of today, I have no indication that we will need to close schools, nor have I been given any indication that a widespread school closure is imminent. The decision to close schools is still left to the local Superintendent, and any decision I make will be in direct consultation with our local Director of Public Health, who has been an invaluable partner and resource throughout this process. That said, it has been recommended we prepare in the event a school closure is needed. If we are forced to close schools, it will most likely be for an extended period of time (up to fourteen days). The Connecticut State Department of Education has sent guidelines and expectations for Superintendents in the event of extensive school closures. One recommendation is that districts provide continuity of instruction, or distance learning opportunities for students during an extended absence. In Connecticut, students are required to attend school for 180 days. In the event that school is disrupted and districts fall short of that requirement, districts have the right to request a waiver of the 180-day statute. The Enfield Board of Education has authorized me to apply for this waiver in the event we are closed for up to two weeks. At this time, I do not have any approval or guarantee that our request will be granted, but I am in regular contact with the Commissioner of Education about this topic. Once I have more information, I will send an update through our school messenger system.

Although we do not have prior approval from the Connecticut State Department of Education that our distance learning plan will count as actual school days, we believe it is in the best interest of our students, staff, and families to initiate this process in order to be fully prepared. Therefore, our entire staff has prepared distance learning packets to be sent home with students in the event of an extended school closure. These materials are designated by grade level and discipline and modified for individual students as needed. Packets will be sent home with students tomorrow (Thursday, March 12th), and you should expect your child to come home with up to fourteen days of instructional materials in the event it is needed. For those of you whose children are absent from school tomorrow, materials will be available on Friday, March 13th. In the event your child will not be in school on Thursday or Friday, we have

established the district office to serve as a distribution center for parents to come pick up their child's packet after work hours. The district office (1010 Enfield Street – the former Alcorn School, first floor) will be open tomorrow, Thursday, March 12th, from 4:00 p.m. until 8:00 p.m. for any parents wishing to pick up their child's information. These packets will also be located on the district website (www.enfieldschools.org) for any family interested in obtaining this information electronically. Directions on when to use these packets, as well as resources for students that will be available during this time, will be communicated prior to any prolonged school cancelation, but it is important that we distribute these materials to students as soon as possible. Putting this information together in a short period of time is a monumental task, and we would not have been able to accomplish this if not for our amazing staff. I want to sincerely thank everyone who pulled together so quickly to ensure our students have every opportunity to continue with their academics, even during a public health emergency.

Another topic that has been of great interest is school events, such as field trips and activities that consist of large gatherings of people (100 or more). This morning, I received guidance from the Commissioner of Education recommending the cancelation or postponement of non-curricular events and activities. Starting today, any school sponsored, out-of-state travel for students or staff will not be permitted. Additionally, all field trips and any school events where large groups are expected, such as athletic contests, music events, or theater performances, will be canceled or postponed through April 17th. This coincides with the conclusion of our April break. There will be an ongoing assessment of these restrictions, and we will notify parents, students, and staff if this order needs to be extended.

Lastly, I want to thank everyone for your patience and understanding during this trying time. As I said earlier, as a parent, I understand the anxiety this public health crisis causes. As your Superintendent, I take my responsibility for the well-being of every child and staff member in our system very seriously. Please know that any decision I make regarding school or programs will always be made with our students' best interest and safety in mind, no matter how difficult the decision is. Times like this require all of us to come together to not only help our kids, but our entire community. Enfield has a history of uniting together and taking care of one another, and I have no doubt we will weather this storm together as well.

Sincerely,



Christopher J. Drezek

Superintendent of Schools