

# HARDING TOWNSHIP SCHOOL

Dr. Matthew A. Spelker  
Superintendent of Schools

Edward Appleton  
Interim School Business Administrator



Mary Donohue  
Principal/Director of Curriculum

Chris Magno  
Director of Student Services

March 12, 2020

## **Re: School Closure and Distance Learning**

Dear Harding Township School Community,

In the last twenty-four hours, I have been in contact with both the Morris County Health Office and the Morris County Executive Superintendent's Office. After consulting with our local health official Dr. Perez, I have informed the Executive County Superintendent of my decision (supported by Dr. Perez) that Harding Township School will be closing and implementing distance learning from Monday, March 16<sup>th</sup> through Friday, March 27<sup>th</sup>. A decision will be made at that time regarding the continuation or suspension of the school closure.

Since the Department of Education's ("DOE") March 5, 2020 guidance memorandum on the Coronavirus, which stated that only a school closure directed by the Department of Health would count towards the 180 school day requirement, the DOE has now placed that decision in the hands of the local school Superintendents. This is also consistent with our Board Policy 8210. By implementing remote learning, the district will still be able to meet the 180 school day state requirement. To be clear, the district is well-positioned and ready to address the needs of our students as we implement distance learning instruction (and all of our teachers have already been trained for distance learning recently).

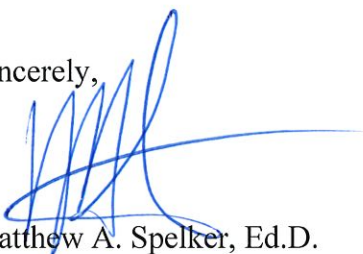
While I am well aware of the difficulty and inconvenience this may represent to many of our families, I believe it is an important and necessary precaution for our school community's safety and well-being. Importantly, health authorities actually believe the actual number of cases of people infected with COVID-19 is grossly underreported because of the lack of adequate testing at this juncture. However, to be clear, there

are no known cases in our community that have been reported. This closure is being done as a proactive and preventative measure.

Our school play performances will not be held this Friday, Saturday, and Sunday. It is my hope that the play can be performed at a later date in the school year. All extra-curricular activities and sports are cancelled until further notice.

Lastly, I want to stress that Harding is not alone in our decision. The following neighboring public school districts have announced that they will be closed starting next week: Summit, Chatham, Florham Park, New Providence, and Mendham Township. I fully expect that many other Districts statewide and nationally will do the same. I will continue to keep the school community updated regarding this situation. In the meantime, if you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to call or email me at [mspelker@hardingtwp.org](mailto:mspelker@hardingtwp.org). Please check the district website for updates and resources concerning our distance learning platform as of Monday, March 16<sup>th</sup>. You will be receiving specific information from your child's teacher regarding accessing assignments through Google Classroom and Google Meet.

Sincerely,



Matthew A. Spelker, Ed.D.

Superintendent

Harding Township School