March 13, 2020

Dear Parents, Families and Community Members,

The coronavirus/COVID 19 influenza has been declared a pandemic by the World Health Organization and a state emergency by Governor Cuomo. Information and guidance from local and state health departments and the state government changes daily. Yesterday, we participated in a conference call with the Steuben County Department of Health and they strongly advised us to reschedule or cancel all large group gatherings. The number of what constitutes a “large group” was undefined but the bigger concern was limiting opportunity for the virus to be brought into the community from an outside source. That was the focus of that discussion. Governor Cuomo later in the day defined a “large gathering” as that of 500 or more but also mandated all gatherings of less than 500 be limited to half the regular seating capacity. We are also seeing the cancellation of college and professional sporting events along with a host of national events and conferences. And so we believe we need to do our part and follow the advice of the Department of Health to limit opportunities for exposure and spread of this virus. Therefore we are announcing the cancellation of all events, activities and programs that involve the general public or students from schools outside of the GST BOCES region. A list of cancellations will be posted on our website and sent home through the principals’ parent newsletters. These cancellations will be in effect through the end of spring break-Sunday April 12. We will evaluate the current situation over spring break and make more long term decisions then. Students have asked about the prom, senior activities and even graduation. Right now, the schedule for those events is unaffected as we feel it’s too far away to make decisions on those events at this time.

School is still open as the Department of Health and Governor are the only entities which can close school and to date, as Steuben County has no identified positive cases, there is no directive to do so. We are striving to keep things as normal as possible for students until the situation improves. The normal school day remains the same with extracurricular activities, clubs and sporting practices still operating normally. Cancellations involve events in which people from outside our student body/staff enter our schools. Spring sports’ practices will continue but all games/matches/meets will be postponed through Sunday April 12.

I also want to assure you that we have plans in place in the event that our schools must be closed. Our teachers are putting together materials containing meaningful learning opportunities which parents will be able to assist their daughter/son with at home. We also have plans if we need to provide meals in the event of a long term closure.
We have worked to balance our response as a district. Given the situation, our first responsibility is to keep our students, our staff and our community as safe as possible. By allowing business as usual we would not be doing our part. Secondly, we also have a responsibility to create a calm and reassuring school environment for our students, ensuring that, as long as we can, teaching, learning, and student engagement in activities outside of the classroom continue.

This is a truly unprecedented situation. We know that students, parents and community members will be disappointed because so many events are being cancelled. However, I believe these actions to be justified given the seriousness of the situation in our state and our country. All Americans are being impacted by events much bigger than any one of us. And at C-S, we are working hard to keep our children and community as safe as possible.

If you have questions or concerns, please feel free to contact me. Email works best. I can be reached at: khagen@cscsd.org

Stay safe and healthy!

[Signature]