

PRESS RELEASE:

North Shore Schools to Close Starting Monday

Schools to Close through at Least March 27

The North Shore area superintendents have collaborated to make a timely and unified decision about school closure that they feel is in the best interests of their faculty, staff, students, and families. This decision was made after significant conversations among school leaders, local public health officials, and state officials. State officials have today urged that municipalities should make decisions based on their local circumstances, and given the rapidly changing COVID-19 crisis, which the World Health Organization has this week labeled a global pandemic.

The following districts have mutually decided to close schools through at least March 27:

- 1. Amesbury Public Schools**
- 2. Beverly Public Schools**
- 3. Chelsea Public Schools**
- 4. Danvers Public Schools**
- 5. Essex North Shore Agricultural and Technical School**
- 6. Everett Public Schools**
- 7. Georgetown Public Schools**
- 8. Gloucester Public Schools**
- 9. Hamilton-Wenham Regional School District**
- 10. Haverhill Public Schools**
- 11. Ipswich Public Schools**
- 12. Lawrence Public Schools**
- 13. Lynnfield Public Schools**
- 14. Manchester Essex Regional School District**
- 15. Marblehead Public Schools**
- 16. Masconomet Regional School District (Middle/High Schools of Boxford, Middleton, Topsfield)**
- 17. Methuen Public Schools**
- 18. Nahant Public Schools**
- 19. Newburyport Public Schools**
- 20. Pentucket Regional School District (Groveland, West Newbury, Merrimac)**
- 21. Rockport Public Schools**
- 22. Saugus Public Schools**
- 23. Swampscott Public Schools**
- 24. Triton Regional School District (Newbury, Rowley, Salisbury,)**
- 25. Tri-Town School Union (Elementary schools of Boxford, Middleton, and Topsfield)**
- 26. Wakefield Public Schools**
- 27. Whittier Regional Vocational Technical High School**
- 28. Winthrop Public Schools**

Leadership for all 28 school districts have decided to close their school facilities beginning on Monday, March 16 through Friday, March 27. School district leadership will continue to re-evaluate the situation on a day-by-day basis.

The school leaders held a conference call today after a lengthy call with the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education and the Massachusetts Department of Public Health. During that call, no determination was made by the state on widespread school closure. The superintendents in this region have consulted with health experts and their own municipal public health agents in reaching a decision that, while difficult, is in the interests of the safety and wellbeing of their communities, which is paramount at all times.

The decision to collectively close schools on the North Shore area has been made after significant consideration and in an effort to proactively address the evolving novel coronavirus (COVID-19) situation.

The [Department of Secondary and Elementary Education \(DESE\)](#) is advising districts throughout the state this morning to cancel or reschedule gatherings of 250 people or more and to limit instances where students, faculty, and staff are closer than 6 feet away from each other. While DESE is not explicitly advising districts close at this time, due to the concerns regarding the spread of this virus among crowds, area superintendents feel it is prudent to close their facilities temporarily. **District leaders additionally encourage students and staff to avoid being in large crowds of people in order to further prevent the spread of the virus.**

Massachusetts school districts have been informed that no district will have to go past June 30 and that school districts will not have to go beyond their planned 185th day of school, regardless of the COVID-19 situation.

Each district will additionally provide updated information through their websites and individual communication channels to their communities as more information becomes available.

The following is a statement from the superintendents in the 28 districts:

“The health and wellbeing of our students, faculty, and staff are of the utmost importance to us all on the North Shore, and as a result, we’ve collectively decided to close our school facilities for the next two weeks. This is being done in an effort to proactively address the evolving

COVID-19 situation. We have each been in close communication for months now with our local and state health officials to ensure we're following their recommendations for preventing the spread of this virus.

"We believe by closing our facilities for this period of time, we will have a positive impact on preventing the spread of this virus and promoting public health and safety by creating a united response to this situation."

Symptoms of the virus include fever, cough, and shortness of breath, and can appear between two and 14 days after exposure, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Anyone who experiences symptoms and believes they may have the virus is advised to contact their health care provider. For more information from the CDC for those who may have the virus, [click here](#).

The North Shore superintendents also wish to encourage students and staff to follow recommended preventative steps from the DPH:

- Practice good hand hygiene! Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds including under your fingernails. Alcohol-based hand sanitizer (at least 60% alcohol content) can be used when soap and water are not available.
- Keep your hands away from your face.
- Cover your nose and mouth when sneezing and coughing with a tissue and discard it immediately. Cough into the sleeve over your elbow instead of your hand. Wash your hands often when coughing and sneezing.
- Stay away from people who are sick and stay home when you are sick.

For more information, visit the DPH website by [clicking here](#) and the CDC's website by [clicking here](#).

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