



**ESSEX REGIONAL EDUCATIONAL SERVICES COMMISSION  
SUPERINTENDENT'S OFFICE**

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**ERESC COVID-19 Closure Update**

Good evening ERES Community:

I hope you and your families are safe, healthy and are doing well. Yesterday, Governor Phil Murphy announced that schools will remain closed and all schools in New Jersey will operate remotely for the remainder of this school year. These last six (6) weeks have indeed been very trying, as we have adjusted to our new normal. Teaching, learning and delivery of services in a distance environment, under the best of circumstances has challenges, but the ERES Community has risen to meet these challenges.

While this news from the Governor has elicited a flood of emotions, we know that this decision was made, due to the severity of the crisis that we face. We must continue to adhere to CDC guidelines and all executive orders in our fight against COVID-19. The health and safety of the students and staff is our first priority.

Since we first closed, we have transitioned from work packets to working on chrome books. Resources were provided in the different departments that were needed to continue providing teaching, learning and services to students. We have coordinated with staff members and parents to get chrome books into students' hands. We also worked on making sure that all students had Wi-Fi access. Additionally, we worked with municipalities, school districts and food distribution centers to ensure that students and their families had access to meals.

I am extremely appreciative of the parents and students, principals and school leaders, teachers and staff, custodial staff, security, Central Office staff, and the ERES Leadership team for all of their hard work during this uncertain time. You have made many things possible for our students during these very trying and stressful circumstances. I am tremendously proud and honored to have you on the ERES team. I also want to thank the members of the Essex Regional Educational Services Commission Board of Directors for their tremendous support and guidance.

I will be meeting further with school leadership to discuss different options for graduation. Each option will depend on our condition and the constraints we face as we approach our graduation date. We will move forward with a plan to create a virtual graduation, just as we will have to do

CONSTITUENT DISTRICTS: Belleville, Bloomfield, East Orange, Essex County  
Vocational Schools, Irvington, Livingston, Montclair, Newark, Orange, and South Orange-Maplewood

for other end of year activities. Certainly, this does not replace a face to face event, but given the circumstances we have been thrust into, we will make the best of situation.

Additionally, I will be meeting with school leadership to discuss student progress and report cards, summer school, summer programs and plans for next school year, just to name a few. We must be inventive and work collectively as we figure out our path ahead.

Details will be shared as we embark on a plan to safely reopen our schools and programs for the summer and fall. These decisions will be very deliberate and thoughtful and will require us to be strategic in our thinking as we look to reopening. Our goal will be to provide excellence while also making sure that no one is placed at risk. Be assured that every decision will be guided by the health and safety of our students and staff. Please check our website for future messaging.

On behalf of the leadership team of the ERES community, I thank you for your continued hard work, commitment and diligence as we strive to provide excellence to all the students we serve. We will get through this together.

Sincerely,

*Laurie W. Newell*

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