



March 30, 2020

Dear Ridgewood School Community,

In response to recent updates, I have received several emails asking that we teach through the spring break. First and foremost, parents, students, and teachers are tired. This weariness is not necessarily from the hard academic work, but most likely from the stress we are all experiencing. While our intent is not to add pressure to this already difficult situation, remote learning is stressful for everyone involved nonetheless.

Canceling spring break would also mean that the school year would end the week before graduation. This date cannot change because it is set based on project graduation. If we reopen later this spring, this scenario would leave a one week gap between the end of the school year and graduation. I feel that it is dangerous for seniors to have a week to “celebrate” prior to graduation. If our community is able to come together for this occasion, I want each of our graduates to be there to be honored.

Furthermore, families of students and staff are juggling this new life we find ourselves in. We have had three weeks of stressful local, state, national, and international news along with a new education paradigm. Spring break is a time for us to strategize about our family schedules, make adjustments, and recharge our batteries. Unfortunately, we are on the front end of how COVID-19 will impact our community, state, and country, and news reports indicate that current social distancing practices could continue for the next several months.

MENTAL HEALTH: Please read the attached document from Lauren DePinto, our District Coordinator of School-Based Mental Health Services. We all have to stay positive, keep learning, and stay in touch. Try these helpful tips:

- Develop a working routine and stick to it, even when life throws a curveball.
- Make time to be creative. I hope you are keeping a diary/journal. It may turn into a great novel...or sitcom.
- Limit time viewing the news. It can be overwhelming.
- Get outside and stay as active as possible.
- Focus on what you have and are grateful for.

FEEL YOU MAY HAVE SYMPTOMS: If you feel sick with COVID-19 symptoms, you should contact your physician. The physician will be able to assist you and provide the next steps. Additionally, the NJ Department of Health (NJDOH) has set up the following to answer your questions:

- **Call: 2-1-1**
- **Call (24/7): 1-800-962-1253**
- **Text: NJCOVID to 898-211**
- **Visit <https://covid19.nj.gov/> or nj.gov/health for additional information**



- **Valley Hospital: 201-447-8000** If you feel you have symptoms, Valley Hospital has set up a system to answer your questions.

SOCIAL/PHYSICAL DISTANCING: Please start thinking about how you will handle social distancing during the spring break, which is the week of April 6-10.

VIRTUAL TOURS FOR OVER THE BREAK (DON'T DO THEM UNTIL THE BREAK):

- Famous Museums: <https://ymlptr3.net/248d3qwsaaaehwquaramyyadaeawsbq/click.php>
- Gettysburg Battlefield of the Civil War <https://www.battlefields.org/visit/virtual-tours/gettysburg-360-virtual-tour>
- White House Artwork <https://artsandculture.google.com/partner/the-white-house>
- Tour the White House <https://www.youvisit.com/tour/aid.depoy>
- Grand Canyon <https://www.nps.gov/grca/learn/photosmultimedia/virtualtour.htm>
- Mount Rushmore <https://www.youvisit.com/tour/videos/mountrushmore/80795?id=74875>
- Hiking during the break <https://tinyurl.com/t35u6sp>
- MORE WILL BE ADDED DURING THE WEEK.

REMINDER: Use the links below for important information from the Village and the district. If you have not received a phone call from Mayor Hache, you have not signed up for the Village alerts. Please do so.

- Sign up for Village E-Notice System - <http://www.ridgewoodnj.net/village-info/enotices-and-alerts-registration>.
- Twitter Accounts - [@RwdPub Schools](#) and [@RWDSupt](#)
- District Facebook Page - [@RidgewoodPublicSchools](#).

ANNUAL SCHOOL ELECTION: The Annual School and Municipal Election will be held on Tuesday, May 12. All registered voters will be receiving vote-by-mail ballots, and there will be no polling places in the May 12, 2020 elections. For more information, click [here](#) to visit the website of the Bergen County Clerk's Office. You can still register to vote if you have not already done so. Information can be found [here](#).

CENSUS 2020: It's time for a friendly competition. Once you complete the census, send your redacted "receipt" to your principal or just let your principal know it is complete. Let's see which school has the highest percentage of completed questionnaires. If you have multiple children in a school, each one counts. If you have children in multiple schools, send the receipt to each principal.

- Fill out the Census online at <https://my2020census.gov/>
- Or you can respond by phone at 844-330-2020.

Contest results as of 3.30.2020 (The contest is open until the Census 2020 closes.)

- 1st - Somerville
- 2nd - RHS
- 3rd - BF
- 4th - Orchard
- 5th - Travell
- 6th - Ridge
- 7th - Willard
- 8th - Hawes

- 9th - GW

TODAY'S GAME SUGGESTIONS:

- Online game: Words with Friends

Other things you can do:

- Keep moving! Since this past weekend wasn't great for hiking, I moved this suggestion to the break. Get out early and play some yard games. You are now two weeks into your exercise routine. They say a habit is formed in three weeks.
- Here are some really cool NEW Twitter feeds. @SteveMartinToGo (Steve Martin for my contemporaries) and @StephenAtHome (Stephen Colbert for my contemporaries and younger).
- Movie/TV - Academy Award Winning *Green Book*. This film will lead to a great family discussion.
- Baked goods: Granola. I know it is another bird food recipe, but my daughters do a great job changing up their recipe all the time. Still not a Rolo. <https://www.thekitchn.com/granola-recipe-258376>
- Home Project: Make some thankful front lawn signs for our healthcare workers, first responders, educators (had to put that in), delivery people, and grocery store employees. I have already seen some around town, and this is a great way to let people know that you appreciate them.
- Remember the Ridgewood Public Library has online resources. <https://www.ridgewoodlibrary.org>
- Call someone. They will appreciate it. If you can make a video call, that's even better for face-to-face connection.
- **REMINDER: 41 Days - This is for dads and students only.** Moms, look away! Mother's Day is Sunday, May 10th. If you are like me, you purchase gifts for your wife at the last minute because she sees every credit card transaction. Online banking! So, strategize now about how to pull Mother's Day off without a florist, restaurant, or last-minute shopping trip. You do not want to mess this up when you have no place to escape!

VALLEY HOSPITAL NEEDS OUR HELP: Please drop off the following items Monday-Friday from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. at the main entrance on 223 North Van Dien Avenue in Ridgewood.

- N95 masks
- Surgical masks
- Face shields and goggles
- Fluid resistant isolation gowns
- Non-latex (nitrile) gloves
- NEW oral thermometers

The **Red Cross** is alerting everyone to blood and platelet shortage. Please donate if you can.

<https://www.redcrossblood.org/>

Keep supporting our local businesses. Many restaurants are offering curbside pickup and delivery. Here are some helpful tips (www.today.com) if you want something besides a home-cooked meal:

- Order from a restaurant you trust
- Order directly from the restaurant when possible
- Opt for contactless delivery or pick up
- Discard all packaging
- Don't share, and wash your hands before and after

I wish you good health!

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Dan Fishbein". The signature is written in a cursive style with a horizontal line at the end.

Daniel Fishbein, Ed.D
Superintendent of Schools

Leaning Into Life's Beauty and It's Fragility

Lauren M. DePinto, LCSW
District Coordinator of School-Based Mental Health Services

As we begin our third week of virtual learning during the school closure amid the COVID crisis, we are confronted by the new reality that has set in. Life is different. Our priorities are shifting and our routines are more streamlined, presumably becoming more and more connected to our innermost values. Perhaps we are doing what we ought to do, not from obligation to our repetitive practices or habits, but from a new, profound sense of appreciation and gratitude. Nevertheless, we have all been challenged to consider our family's needs--and the needs of our Village and surrounding community--much more deeply.

Many of us discuss our current situation as a "new normal." We are all challenged to think and behave differently, and our feelings are deeply affected as well. These challenges are all natural components of adjustment and adaptation--of which we human beings are uniquely capable. This new normal is scary to many of us who are experiencing so much change and ambiguity. But, keep in mind every one of us is experiencing this and learning to adjust *together* - with flexibility, understanding, and compassion. We owe it to ourselves to be patient (especially with ourselves, partners, and children) and focus on our own and our family's mental health first and foremost. Perhaps we can better appreciate just how we have adapted to this broad change to our lives. Maybe we can notice the growth in ourselves, be more mindful of our--and our family members'--efforts and responsiveness. We can, and should, focus more on the strengths and abilities in ourselves and our family members that have been revealed. What have we learned about the psychological principles of health and wellness?

I am keenly aware that leaning into the unknown can be frightening, but only if we allow it to be. As I said in my previous message - there is power in choice. We can choose to label our emotions and teach our children by example to do the same. We can also choose to hold space for ourselves and our families. Most importantly, we can choose to grow stronger and more mindful with each new loving and meaningful encounter that each day brings. I strongly believe that the lessons we are learning alongside one another during these unprecedented times and the countless messages of courage, hope, humor, genuine care, and LOVE will be what enables and empowers us to sit with our emotions, whatever they may be, in healthy ways so we can move forward and come out of this as individuals and as a community - better than before.

Amidst the fear, uncertainty, abrupt change, and loss, I can't help but feel like this is an incredible opportunity for collective personal growth and, quite possibly, sustainable societal change. Uncomfortable and frightening as it may be, the truth is any real change implies the break-up of the world as we know it and have become accustomed to rely on. For those of us (perhaps the silent majority) who privately hoped for the world to slow down, it seems we got what we wished for - just not in the way we expected. One of the ways we can adaptively

respond to this new unexpected reality is by becoming what psychologist Dr. Susan David calls emotionally agile.

In her book, *Emotional Agility: Get Unstuck, Embrace Change, and Thrive in Work and Life* (2016), renowned Harvard Medical School Psychologist, Dr. Susan David, introduces a concept she terms “emotional agility.” In her research on emotions, happiness, and achievement Dr. David shines a necessary light on the complex interplay between the beauty and fragility of life - which has become a message for our times. She defines emotional agility as “the process that enables us to navigate life’s twists and turns with self-acceptance, clear-sightedness, and an open-mind”. She graciously reminds us that the crisis happening outside of us doesn’t need to be a crisis within us. Instead, she believes, if we can lean into and learn from our experience we take control of our narrative. In other words, we own our emotions - they do not own us. Our emotions are data points and feeling states that can be changed. Managing our expectations is a big component of remaining emotionally agile. We all learn to accept discomfort and adversity, and we initially react to these circumstances as most humans do. Our fears will be ignited, and the protective voice of our ego may get louder and louder, as it tells us to avoid and distract ourselves from discomfort or pain. But just as our nervous systems are built for quick responsiveness to environmental adversity, they contain mechanisms to adjust, to adapt, to calm, and to settle. We can and should help our individual minds and our families function as effectively as possible to maximize flexibility.

Please take the time to check out the links below and watch Dr. Susan David share her knowledge in her words, if you haven’t done so already. I hope you find her gentle yet honest approach to life - particularly during these times - as reassuring as I have - and feel free to share. Her ideas are worth spreading.

https://www.ted.com/talks/susan_david_the_gift_and_power_of_emotional_courage?language=en

Harvard psychologist Dr. Susan David shares how the way we deal with our emotions shapes everything that matters: our actions, careers, relationships, health and happiness. In this deeply moving, humorous and potentially life-changing talk, she challenges a culture that prizes positivity over emotional truth and discusses the powerful strategies of emotional agility.

https://www.ted.com/talks/susan_david_how_to_be_your_best_self_in_times_of_crisis

"Life's beauty is inseparable from its fragility," says psychologist Dr. Susan David. In a special virtual conversation, she shares wisdom on how to build resilience, courage and joy in the midst of the coronavirus pandemic. Responding to listeners' questions from across the globe, she offers ways to talk to your children about their emotions, keep focus during the crisis and help those working on the front lines. (This virtual conversation is part of the TED Connects series, hosted by head of TED Chris Anderson and current affairs curator Whitney Pennington Rodgers.)