

Bergen County Special Services School District
SPRINGBOARD PROGRAM

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A LETTER FROM DR. HALL

Dear Students and Families,

Well, first let me say, that this is a very different situation for all of us. It is stressful and a bit uncomfortable, as are many things that are out of the norm for us as humans. We like routines and when those are changed on us, it can be difficult. The other obvious thing here is, as a program staff, we are really going to miss you during the time the building is closed. We will get through this together!

You might be wondering, “Why are we closed?”, “What is this coronavirus?”, “Why are we doing work at home?”, “What is social distancing?”, or “when will we be back to school?” So I wanted to try to help you understand in case anyone was feeling nervous or didn’t fully understand what is happening.

What is the coronavirus?

The school is closed because the virus that is going around is a new virus and because it is new that means it can be spread easily from person to person. The Coronavirus is often called COVID – 19. From the CDC: “A novel coronavirus is a new coronavirus that has not been previously identified. The virus causing coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19), is not the same as the coronaviruses that commonly circulate among humans and cause mild illness, like the common cold.” Because it is new, people have not built immunity to it, which is usually what happens in the body after being exposed to certain illnesses. For example, sometimes we won’t catch a cold because we are immune to that strain. The reason the number of COVID – 19 cases are increasing is because it is new.

The virus can cause a fever, a cough, and sometimes difficulty breathing in more severe cases. It also might cause body aches or a headache. For some people that catch it they might not have any symptoms, some might have mild to moderate symptoms, but for some people who have health issues, the virus can be more dangerous. So the hope is that by closing schools, it will help to stop the spread of the virus so that it doesn’t get to those people who might get very sick from it. We all have to do our part in that while we are closed so to slow the spread of the virus.

Why are we closed and working from home?

Now that we know what the virus is and why many things like schools are closing, I want to explain why schools are giving work to be completed at home. Schools must provide a certain amount of school day instruction to students. The school closing for this time is not going to allow us to reach those days if we didn’t continue to do our lessons at home. So in order to not continue mandatory school through the summer, we are going to work through the school closure. This is new for everyone... not just for Bergen County Special Services but the whole country and even other parts of the world. So together we will take it step by step and day by day and make it through! As, always, just do your best.

What do you do if you get sick?

If you are not feeling well, you should tell your family and have them help you call the doctor so that your doctor can advise you on what to do next. It is very important to call first before heading to the Doctor's office.

What can you do to prevent the spread of germs and viruses?

- First, wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. Work up a good lather of suds, pick a favorite song, or part of a song, that lasts 20 seconds and sing it while you are washing your hands. Wash them when you first come home before you touch things in your house, after you use the restroom, and always before you cook or eat, and again when you are finished cooking and/or eating. If you are out and need to wash your hands but don't have access to a sink you can use 60% alcohol hand sanitizer. Put it on liberally, rub it all over and let it air dry. The drying is what kills germs. This isn't as good as washing your hands but can be done until you can get to a sink to wash with soap.
- Try to sneeze and cough into a tissue that can be thrown out and then wash your hands. If you do not have a tissue when you need to cough or sneeze, cough or sneeze into the top part of your arm.
- Try not to touch your face. Germs spread through contact with your nose, eyes, and mouth. This is tricky because we often don't realize that we are doing this. Make sure you don't bite your nails!
- Stay home if you are sick!
- Stay away from others that are sick!
- For the time being, practice social distancing.

What is social distancing?

This is being mentioned a lot. What does it mean? It means try to stay home as much as possible. Limit interactions with groups of people. Only go out if necessary. Try to stay at least 6 feet away from others if you are out. You can, of course, go in your yards or go for walks with your family but limit close contact with people outside of your family. That is going to help slow the spread of the virus. During the time that schools are closed, they don't want people going out to eat, or in crowded stores, malls, or concerts. Most of these places have or will close this week anyway in effort to "Flatten the curve". If you hear "Flatten the curve" when talking about this virus it means that they are trying to slow down the spread so that a lot of people don't catch it at one time. If they didn't put any restrictions out and everyone kept going to school, work, stores, parties, concerts, etc., it would spread from person to person fast and the number of cases on a chart would climb quickly. If they put in social distancing restrictions in place and close schools, businesses, and everyone stays home as much as possible, it would not spread from person to person as fast, slowing the virus down.

When will we be back at school?

The truth is, we don't know right now. If everyone does their part, the quicker we can get back. We will keep you updated as information comes in and will keep updating work for you to do at home while we are out to keep us on track.

What else should you be doing to take care of you?

It is really important during a time of stress and disruption in our regular routine to take care of yourself. I want to make sure that in order to keep our spirits up, we are all following (staff included) a regular schedule so that we can feel good, healthy, and positive. So, what are some things we need to do?

- Stick to a routine. Make sure you get up at your regular hours during the week. This is what our bodies are used to so it will keep our schedules of sleep on track and keep us motivated. It will also help us tremendously when it is time to go back to school and work.
- Follow your regular hygiene routine. Shower or bathe every day. Get up, brush your teeth and your hair, get dressed, if you wear makeup put some on, and put deodorant on. Self-care tasks should be done as you usually do. Follow your shaving routine, nail cutting routine, nail polish routine if you wear it, etc.
- Complete your school work. Make sure you are working on your packets from your teachers a little bit every day and doing the assignments in your homes. Don't do the whole packet up front leaving yourself with nothing to do for the rest of the week. We want to keep those bright minds engaged every day.
- Take breaks for your meals. For example, if you are working on your school work, take a lunch break and then go back.
- Engage in physical activity. We are used to walking to the bus stops and through the community and many people have gym routines. Engage in 20-30 minutes of physical activity 5 days a week or 30-40 minutes three times a week during the time we are off.
- Talk to your family in your household. Talk about whether you feel nervous. Talk about if you are struggling. Make each other smile and laugh. Find out new things about each other.
- Talk to your family and friends that don't live with you on the phone or on video chat. Try to call one or two people a day. Make sure they are doing ok and stay connected.
- Do mindfulness activities. I will be sending activities out through email. These should be done each day and for about 5 minutes to keep us present and focused.
- Practice deep breathing each day. This should take about 3 to 5 minutes and I will send an email out with directions on how to do so properly.
- Do your household chores. Talk to your families about chores you can do and make a schedule. Get at least one major chore done a day and figure out some things that you can work on together in the house throughout the week.
- Complete healthy choice leisure activities for at least 30 minutes a day. By this, I mean screen-free activities. Read a book, do a puzzle (jigsaw or crossword), draw or write, play a game with someone, teach yourself solitaire with real cards, do a craft, complete a lego activity, sew or knit, sing, dance, listen to music, or anything else. I WANT TO HEAR WHAT YOU ARE DOING SO I CAN MAKE SUGGESTIONS TO OTHERS!!!!

- Take time for some unhealthy leisure activities. Watch some tv, play video games, watch appropriate you tube videos, go on social media. Just make sure you are watching things that lift you up and keep you positive. Make sure the content is appropriate and that the time you spend doing these activities is reasonable.
- Get enough rest! The most important step you can take for your immune system is getting enough sleep.
- Eat healthy food! It is easy to fall into bad habits when we are home and choices might at times be limited with the current situation but try to make the best choices to keep your body healthy.
- Make sure you take your vitamins and medicine and have enough on hand.
- Tell someone if you are struggling. If you are stressed or upset please reach out. We are all in this together and we need to rely on one another.
- Complete some positivity exercises for a few minutes each day. This can be through prayer, positive thoughts, positive daily affirmations, or recognizing a few things you are thankful for.

I will be sending along a chart to mark these things down. This is my assignment to you during the time we are closed. I am also asking you to complete one goal a day that is related to transition. I want you to take time and really think about the goals, objectives, who will help you, and some roadblocks that might pop up. There will be an assignment sheet on that. I may also send home some self-assessment sheets that will help in planning for the future. I will include a guided journal that is optional.

Just so you know, I will be doing most of these things at home as well. I want you to know how much we, as a staff, value each and every one of you. This struggle will make our society better and stronger. We will learn to appreciate each other. We will learn to appreciate what we have. We will get through this. Thank you all so much for everything you have done so far and I look forward to speaking with you all during the time that the building is closed! You know where to reach me if you need (at least I think I do but if not, look below my name where my email is listed). We miss you already! You got this! Stay well!

Dr. Hall

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