Members of the Rensselaer City School District Community,

These are certainly unprecedented times. The precautions that our society is undertaking together represent a total change to our routines and a far departure from our comfort zones. Many of us are experiencing the anxiety and fear that is a natural consequence of this situation. It is important that we work together to make sure that all of these precautions and disruptions are effective in the effort to slow the spread of COVID-19.

The superintendents of our region met twice this weekend to hear from members of the department of health and to put a plan together that will provide the social distancing while doing our best to establish the best environment that we can to continue the learning process. On Monday, our teachers will be working hard to establish consistent, reliable channels of communication with parents and students. We all know that student-teacher relationships are the catalyst for any learning. Although there is no replacement for face-to-face communication, we will do our best to utilize technology to keep those conversations and relationships strong during this separation.

The final piece to this transition is one last day for our teachers to establish the new expectations with the kids and to prepare them for a new way of receiving instruction. We know that sending kids to school can be a source of additional anxiety for families. As we look at what learning may be lost for the children of our community over the coming weeks or months, we believe that this one day could make a huge difference in the ability to establish communication methods to mitigate that loss. It is important that everyone understands why this strategy is being deployed. It is also important to know that if any new developments arise that increase the risk of this day, we will reevaluate the necessity to be open on Tuesday.

The 23 school districts in our BOCES region (including RCSD) have collectively agreed that we will all cancel classes beginning Wednesday, 3/18 and continuing through Friday, 3/27. We continue to monitor all guidance from local, state and federal agencies. At this time, there are no confirmed cases of COVID-19 in Rensselaer County. We will reassess the duration of the cancellation on a regular basis considering all information as it becomes available.

During this cancellation of classes, students and teachers will not be required to report. All 12-month and hourly employees will continue to work, barring any further direction from the Department of Health.

We recognize that this is an inconvenience to our families. As we take on this social responsibility, we will work hard to minimize the instructional impact to the children. The district has been and will remain in communication with local health department officials. It is our hope that this closure will provide time to prevent any potential community spread of illness.

We will be communicating out specific online resources and a specific breakfast and lunch plan after our day of preparation on Monday. Please keep an eye out for continued communication.

Thanks to everyone for working through this challenge together.

Joseph Kardash
Superintendent, Rensselaer City School District