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Orchard Elementary
Ridgewood Public Schools

January 26, 2020

Good Afternoon Orchard Families,

I hope that you have enjoyed a nice weekend. By now, you have received and read the communication from Dr. Fishbein that was emailed to families on Friday, January 24 regarding our field closure at Orchard School. Many of you who were at pick up on Friday saw the fencing as it was being installed. As such, we would like to provide some additional support and information to Orchard families prior to the start of school on Monday.

What should I tell my child?

Depending on your child's age, grade level, and awareness of the issue, this answer may vary. In school, our staff members have kept it simple for students. On Friday, we informed students that the fencing was in preparation for a summer project to replace our field and grass. These areas need some new soil, and to get ready for the project, we are not able to walk or play there for the remainder of this school year.

If they ask additional follow up questions, such as they heard the soil is "bad", you may want to respond with some level of accuracy. Remember, an elementary student seeks reassurance from adults regarding any information they have "heard". So, a response could simply indicate that there are some chemicals in the soil that are not healthy for us and new soil and grass will be put down this summer. With any topic, students arrive at school with varying degrees of knowledge. At school, this is the extent to which we will elaborate.

What about Field Day, Fifth Grade Finale, etc.?

We will absolutely still hold these events as scheduled! Our school staff members are already hard at work brainstorming additional ideas and solutions. More information will come as these events get closer, and we look forward to our partnership with the HSA and parents on these special and memorable events for our students.

Will my child still get to play outside?

Yes! As you read in the communication from Dr. Fishbein, the grass and soil surfaces have been fenced off. We are fortunate to have a wide stretch of blacktop, as well as playground areas, available for our use. Outdoor recess will continue, weather dependent of course. This week, we will come up with a solution for balls or other objects that go over the fencing.

Where can I find all of the information and updates regarding this issue?

As Dr. Fishbein's letter stated, a specific website has been designated for an archive of information presented and shared thus far. You can find this under the [district homepage](#), or the [Orchard news page](#). Here you can view everything that has been shared with our community. This site will continue to be updated with additional information as soon as it becomes available.

Finally, I would like to extend my sincere thanks to the Orchard community. While this information has surprised and unsettled us, our parents have shown composure and respect over these last few weeks. I am very proud to be your principal and to continue to work collaboratively with our families. The school staff and I appreciate your support as we work together to ensure our year continues to be a positive and successful one. I am confident that the remediation will be completed successfully and the 2020-21 school year will be another amazing year at Orchard. We are a special community and I remain grateful for the opportunity to encourage your children as they learn and grow!

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Mary Ferreri".

Mary Ferreri
Principal