

Dear Merrimack Families~

Today, the Merrimack School District launched remote learning for students in the midst of the COVID-19 health emergency. The work of all our staff has been nothing short of extraordinary. Early this morning, and throughout the school day, teachers, support staff, administrators and personnel greeted parents and students who arrived at each of our schools to receive school work developed by teachers for distribution in just the last few days. It was a heartwarming sight to see our elementary students arriving at their schools with their family members and greeted with cheers and smiles (and a few tears) by our staff with signs like “We Miss You” and “We Can Do This.” Many arriving cars carried their own signs too, thanking all their teachers and school helpers for their work and sharing how much they were missed too. Everyone involved observed the published protocols around social distancing and yet, in spite of that, it was very obvious just how closely connected our school communities are with each other, and how much they mean to each other always, but now more than ever. The dedication of our staff, all staff, in the service of our community, was on full display today. For example:

- Beginning at 10:30, community members arrived at Merrimack High School, greeted by a cheering and smiling group of district food service staff waiting for them outside by the special education entrance. They distributed over **130 lunches** prepared by our staff with just over 24 hours’ notice. In addition, **41 lunches** were delivered to homes with the assistance of our transportation provider, STA. Over 170 lunches prepared for and distributed to Merrimack families today.
- Throughout the day, technology staff fielded phone calls from parents seeking Chromebook to assist with remote learning. As of 2:30 this afternoon, we received requests for **432 Chromebooks** which will be distributed over the next few days. Before distribution, they will be cleaned/sanitized by technology staff according to protocols established for computer devices.
- Technology staff have also worked very hard to support remote learning in innumerable ways, including teacher support, technical support, troubleshooting, increasing access and any other task necessary to help leverage our technology tools to support the delivery of education to our students under enormously challenging logistical circumstances.
- Custodians have worked tirelessly, each day, cleaning/disinfecting teacher workspaces, public areas, door knobs, stair rails among other locations to ensure a safe working environment for those choosing to work in the schools. The custodial staff have been among the many critical employees who have made it possible for us to continue our work in service of our students and families.
- Administrative assistants in each building of our district always serve as the beating heart of our operations. Their responsibilities are too numerous to mention, but today, in particular, demonstrated just how vital they are to the work we do. They are the face and the voice of our schools and our offices, they keep us running, keep us organized, and help us every day in ways too many to mention.

Today was a demonstration of the strength and goodness of the Merrimack community. Families came to our schools today with pizzas and coffee and sandwiches and cookies and cards of thanks for all our staff to enjoy as they worked to help launch this first day of remote learning and as an expression of thanks for their effort on behalf of Merrimack students. The generosity and kindness demonstrated by our families towards the members of their individual school communities was just astounding, and appreciated by everyone more than you can imagine. I would like to make special note of the Merrimack Cardinals, who donated \$400.00 in gift cards to Merrimack families in need. These gift cards will be distributed exactly as requested over the next few days. It isn’t

possible to express just how grateful we all are for the generosity we saw and experienced firsthand today throughout Merrimack.

We have now entered a new and unfamiliar time for our families, ourselves, and, of course, our schools. It isn't possible to predict what will happen next. But today was a great example of the stability and comfort that our schools provide to our community in difficult times. We will continue to do our best to serve the needs of our school district community over the coming days. Finally, once again, a huge thank you to the entire Merrimack School District community for extraordinary efforts today, and to the many, many people who showed that community such great appreciation.

Mark McLaughlin  
Superintendent