

Dear Merrimack Families~

The strange days continue. As I write this, we are expecting an accumulating snowfall through the day and overnight which may impact schedules around the distribution of lunch, work packets, and chromebooks/ipads tomorrow. Please stay connected to our various media platforms for updated information on tomorrow's distribution schedules. We very much hope to be able to continue those distributions as planned, but will have to be sure conditions are safe for driving. We will know more tomorrow. Stay tuned.

As the phase in of remote learning has taken hold in the Merrimack School District, I'd like to offer some clarity about expectations around "doing school" from home. First, it is important to note that last week's efforts were geared toward ensuring that students had access to appropriate schoolwork and the all the tools necessary to engage with it. For that reason, last week may have felt somewhat overwhelming for many students and parents as families so quickly received so much in the way of startup materials. However, if I've learned anything from the experience of the last few weeks it is that with time and patience almost anything can be figured out. And so it is with school work and the tools you've recently received. Now that, at least for the time being, you have the appropriate materials, educators' efforts this week are geared toward providing guidance to families around what to do with them and how to manage it all. For example:

- pacing of assignments
- how to support learning and instruction in the home setting
- how to leverage instructional guidelines to manage time and expectations
- how educators will address issues of grading

These are all very important next steps to address in the rollout of this once in a lifetime situation. Educators and administrators will carefully and methodically evaluate the proper response to all these issues and will share outcomes as they emerge seeking guidance, as always, from state authorities wherever possible. In the meantime, please reflect on the following message: These are very difficult and challenging times. There are exponentially more questions than answers right now about most things, and in the absence of immediate answers, please continue to be patient with yourselves, with each other, and with those working to help find those answers. We will get to, and through, all of it in the right way, and as conditions allow. For now, school work should be viewed as an opportunity to stay connected, to keep young minds active and engaged, and to lay the groundwork for a much hoped for return to our normal routines back at school, where our students truly belong. It is not meant to be stressful or to add to an already full plate of concerns. If you need help managing this unusual situation please seek support from your home school. Whether staff are working on site or remotely, they are there to help guide you as best they can.

Currently, the expectation of our governor and our education commissioner is that school will continue, in whatever form, regardless of possible future orders to shelter-in-place or some other kind of order to isolate. This is not true in other states but is, for the time being anyway, true in New Hampshire. Therefore, the implication of this decision, by our state authorities, on public schools is that we continue to find ways to provide our services to students and families in our district in whatever way we can. We work on this everyday as we will keep faith with our commitment to the education of our students. We will of course update everyone on any change in guidance that we receive from state authorities, particularly as relates to school and school district operations. In the meantime, we will continue to provide our services to the very best of our ability.

We are all learning so much about how flexible we really are, how much we can expand our thinking beyond what we thought possible, and how resilient we are. These lessons will be with us

long after this crisis has passed. That is good news, for ourselves as adults and for the youth of our community. Remind them of that whenever you can.

Have a good night and stay well.

Mark McLaughlin
Superintendent