

Dear Merrimack Families~

Up until last Thursday, schools across the state were operating under the governor's order that schools would remain closed through April 3<sup>rd</sup>. Given that reality, plans and protocols were developed with the idea that we would return to school next Monday, April 6<sup>th</sup>, despite mounting evidence that COVID-19 might well further delay the re-start of school. On Thursday, the governor confirmed that delay, and now schools are operating under a different set of expectations now that we know that schools will be remotely instructing at least for the next month (May 4<sup>th</sup>).

As we start our second full week of remote learning under these evolving realities we are now forced to reckon with what a long (and perhaps even longer) delay will mean for school and district operations. Later this week, we will be issuing information about instructional schedules, grading and report cards, and measures the district is taking to ensure as much integrity in the learning process as remote instruction will allow. Additionally, we will be providing clarity about April vacation and, in a few weeks, will provide as much information as we can on things like high school graduation and other important end of year activities. Obviously, given how fluid this situation is, with daily developments, it is premature to make decisions on important matters that are still a few months off. As I said previously, we are hoping for the best, and preparing for the worst, and hoping that time will guide us.

In the immediate future, however, we will provide updated information about school work and grading expectations. We recognize the delicate balance families are treading between home life, remote school life and work life. Our goal this week is to provide you with additional clarity now that we know we must maintain remote learning for at least the next month. Look for additional information coming from me and, more importantly, from each of your schools as they continue their communication efforts with you. Your home school(s) is still the best place to seek reliable information on most things related to your child's remote learning experience.

Finally, remember that staying well is every person's most important responsibility. Your schools will continue to refine their practices related to remote learning, home/school balance, grading, expectations etc. and will communicate those with you over the course of this week and beyond. In the meantime, please recall earlier reflections I have shared with you: school work is intended to keep your student engaged, in a routine, and prepared for the next step in their learning journey, whether that is later this year back in his/her home school for the final stretch before summer or next fall. If you need assistance maintaining home/school balance during these difficult days, please reach out to your child's teacher, your school's administrative team or your guidance counselors for support and guidance. They are still with you and ready to help.

Stay well.

Mark McLaughlin  
Superintendent