

Dear Merrimack Families~

As the second full week of remote learning comes to an end our school district, just like our families, continues to adjust to this new and very strange reality. Each day brings new revelations about the virus, greater understanding about health precautions that must be taken relative to the virus and safety precautions that must be taken relative to technology, and greater recognition of what we are all capable of doing and achieving in even the most difficult of circumstances. For example, this week alone, our food services have prepared lunches home delivered to more than 400 families in partnership with our transportation provider as well as nearly 700 more lunches picked up by families at our high school location. That makes the total of lunches served, to date, at over 3000 in just 2 ½ weeks! As educators, our initial concern about how to effectively develop and implement a meaningful remote learning environment for our students has given way to greater confidence each day both on the part of teachers and students. We are also beginning to see the emergence of different kinds of celebrations among our teachers and our students that reinforce the school community bonds that have only strengthened during this health emergency. I hope you've had an opportunity to view some recently posted videos on our schools' individual websites. They are funny, joyful and happy reminders that even though we are not together, our unique school communities, and our school district community, is thriving. The virus has clearly no power over that!

Just this afternoon, Education Commissioner Edelblut, in a conference call with school district leaders throughout New Hampshire, said there is a 50% likelihood that remote learning may be extended through the rest of the year. As I have said on a number of occasions, we may well have to begin to think, as a community, about what it would mean if that were to happen or if we, as a community, came to that conclusion even if the state does not. We have lots of decisions to make over the coming weeks and will then, as now, have to combine the interests of student learning with student and staff safety when making them. No matter what happens, and there is really no way to know quite yet what that might be, I feel greater confidence each day that we will create the conditions for students and staff that will achieve both the interest of their safety and their education. Make no mistake—we cannot recreate remotely what we do every day in the classroom. But that is not our choice right now. It is merely the consequence of the circumstance we find ourselves in at the moment. But what we can do, and what I believe we have done, is make the most of the current circumstance, laying the groundwork for the safe and productive return of our students and staff, whenever that may be.

I leave you tonight with a link <https://sites.google.com/view/msddistancelearningresources/home> to a site created by some of our outstanding library and media staff that contains some educational resources for families to refer to and rely on during this emergency. It is on the District webpage as well, along with all other Covid-19 resources, and is updated daily. Just another example of making the most and doing the best with the situation we're in, which may one day end up being the greatest lesson our students will take away from this experience.

Enjoy the weekend and stay well.

Mark McLaughlin
Superintendent