

Dear Merrimack Families~

Tonight I want to share some good news. After a month that has seen far more than its share of worrying headlines and a near total shutdown of life as we've known it, we have also had the privilege of seeing our students and our staff rise to this unprecedented challenge in inspiring ways. Ordinary activities like completing school work, or presenting a lesson, or providing lunch, or distributing a chrome book, or sharing a kind word have been made extraordinary by the sheer fact of their occurring at all in the face of the massive disruptions caused by the virus. To be sure our collective patience has been tested by this experience, but it has also been rewarded by those who continue to do their best under conditions none of us could reasonably have expected. And if the fact of our students' and staffs' extraordinary efforts in this pressure driven time were not enough good news, tonight I have even more.

Granite State Challenge has been a New Hampshire staple for many years. Showcasing New Hampshire high school youth, this competition has afforded students a wonderful opportunity to demonstrate and celebrate their academic skills. For viewers, it has provided a peek at our future and validates what those of us in education have the privilege of seeing every day; our young people are interesting, interested, creative, informed and highly engaged in the world around them. And they're pretty competitive too! Last week, NH PBS (Channel 11) televised Merrimack High School's quarterfinal match against the Academy for Science and Design. I have attached a link, below, to the Manchester Union Leader article regarding that match (Spoiler alert: Merrimack won!) Below that link is a link to upcoming televised episodes of Granite State Challenge. During these sometimes dreary days, I encourage you to brighten them up by tuning in and following your high school team's progress through the rest of the season (all pre-recorded). In addition to the outstanding performance of our students, I also wish to commend their Coach, Dr. Sarah Campbell, their assistant coach, Mrs. Linda Mandra, and all of the teachers at Merrimack High School responsible for contributing to this team's success. And since the folks at Merrimack High School would be the first to tell you that a successful high school student is the product of all the learning that came before, I'd also like to offer thanks to all the teachers and helpers and parents and family members of this outstanding team for all they've done to bring them to this point. We can't wait for the next episode! Congratulations Tomahawks!

https://www.unionleader.com/news/education/granite-state-challenge-merrimack-high-defeats-academy-of-science-and-design/article_9f6cba4c-059f-5606-ab70-669cb0594c5d.html

<https://nhpbs.org/schedule/summary.aspx?progId=GraniteStateChallenge3815>

In additional good news, I have attached an article showcasing Merrimack High School Social Studies teacher Lindsay Siebert, who has recently been selected as New Hampshire's nominee for the MacGregor Teacher of the Year Award, sponsored by the National History Day Board of Trustees and its president, Dr. James F. Harris. As you can imagine, this is a highly prestigious award and Mrs. Siebert has already distinguished herself just by being the only New Hampshire nominee. The next step, of course, is the announcement of the national award winner. Whatever happens next, Mrs. Siebert has already made herself, her department, her school, and our school district very proud indeed. We wish her all the best and thank her for her efforts on behalf of Merrimack youth.

Also tonight, I wish to share with you an important resource shared with us by Sarah Finigan, our district's home to school liaison. Our school district's System of Care and Learning Supports (SOCALS) team, of which Sarah is a member, has worked very hard over the past few years to

support the conditions for student success by addressing their social and emotional needs. Those needs have not disappeared during this period of remote learning. In fact, under the current conditions, the correlation between emotional wellness and academic success has never been more clear. Sarah's recent research into the needs of families during this period of home isolation brought her to the discovery of a resource guide (see link below) which we feel will be of great use to families at this time, many of whom, for obvious reasons, are in need of a variety of supports. Our district team's continued dedication to the wellness of our families, in recognition of the strains this time has put on them and all of us, is a good news reminder that despite our remote learning environment, our staff are still working for and with the students and families of our district. I continue to be so grateful to them for all their hard work on our behalf.

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1-UyjrJm3ifZe44St-tiAf9jIf7XrpAI/view>

Finally, for more good news please continue to follow the websites of your children's individual schools. You'll see story hours and school songs and pledges of allegiance and interesting facts and signs of how much our students are missed by the teachers who miss them. These are not normal times. But the work of our staff and administrators shows that routine can still be established, that abnormal doesn't have to be scary, and that good things can come in bad times.

Stay well.

Mark McLaughlin
Superintendent