Good Evening Merrimack Families~

As I indicated in last evening’s message, important discussions must be had very soon concerning the question of extending remote learning in light of the current health emergency.  These are not easy conversations to have.  However, the situation we all find ourselves in requires that we face these challenging issues head on, with as much purpose and planning as we can give to them in the midst of the uncertainty that surrounds us.  Separate from, but related to, questions concerning the possible extension of remote learning are questions about high school graduation and how the school district will address and report on the academic progress of students during this period of remote learning.  Toward that end, I am writing tonight to announce a special meeting of the Merrimack School Board to be held on Wednesday, April 15th at 7:30 p.m.  This meeting will be conducted remotely, as before, given the norms around social distancing.  In addition, please note that this meeting can be followed on Merrimack TV (Channel21) and on the Merrimack TV Facebook page.  Finally, please observe that the meeting can be accessed telephonically by calling in to one of the numbers listed above.  This means of accessing a public meeting is the only one required by the governor’s emergency orders. **(Please see meeting access information, below).**

We look forward to providing the school board and the Merrimack community with additional information about how we are addressing some of the most challenging issues facing public schools throughout our state and across the country.  There is no blueprint for how to do any of this.  But that does not mean there is no plan.  In fact, planning and working through the consequences of each possible step along the path of this remote learning environment has become our chief occupation.  Sir Isaac Newton’s third law of motion states that *for every action there is an equal and opposite reaction*. That law also seems to apply to almost every decision we make in regards to schools and schooling in these extraordinary times.  There are excellent reasons that guide a particular decision, and equally excellent reasons that guide against that same decision.  Sometimes, in spite of the best planning, another law enters the debate to complicate the process of decision making—the law of unintended consequences—for which there are no doubt equal and opposite actions and reactions.  In other words, complicated times make for complicated problems.  However, that does not mean that there can be no solutions.  Tomorrow night’s school board meeting is another step in the process of evaluating the various components of particular problems we must address and then providing a blueprint for ways to address them.  And from that process I am confident that we will continue to planfully and carefully develop the proper solutions.

Stay well.

Mark McLaughlin

Superintendent