

Dear Merrimack Families~

While we begin this week as we ended the last one, focused on ensuring the best possible remote learning environment for our students, other familiar rhythms of the school year continue despite the interruption brought on by the health emergency. School district personnel are working remotely to pay the district's bills, prepare contracts for professional and support staff for a new school year, clean our schools and begin preparations for summer maintenance projects. Administrators are completing annual staff evaluations. And always at this time in the spring, even as we are knee deep in one school year, educators and administrators are beginning to think about next year, and how to make it better. These conversations always happen in the spring, and as we close in on May, they become more frequent and more informed. In these uncertain and troublesome times, there is comfort in the rhythms and rituals of our lives. While it is never fun to pay bills, for us, paying them now on behalf of the school district is a sign that some things have not changed and that despite this massive interruption, we have found a way to achieve efficiency and maintain our obligations. In the preparation of staff contracts, we find comfort in the thought that this means we will be back to normal some day with our teachers and students back where they belong. Watching our custodians taking good care of our facilities and beginning to get a head start on summer maintenance projects means our schools will be ready for staff and students when it is safe to return. Staff evaluations and plans for improving our practice for next year is confirmation of the belief that these difficult days will come to an end and serve as a reminder that when they do we will be ready-invigorated and prepared for future challenges and smarter than before because of the lessons this year's challenges have taught us.

In the pre-virus days, these tasks might have seemed like just more additions to a never ending to-do list. But now, these tasks take on a new meaning. They are reminders of both what remains normal about now and what is hopeful about what is to come. As we all face another week of remote learning, I hope that despite the significant and very real challenges we are all experiencing maintaining the difficult balance between school and work life, that we can also recognize and appreciate the routine that it affords us, and the sense that in spite of all that is new, different, and unfamiliar, there remains something constant, predictable, and even welcome in the new rhythms of our life. We will finish this school year strong and start it again, when the time is right, stronger still because of what we have gone through and the lessons it has taught us all. I start this week looking forward to all the good that is to come for our schools, our students, and our families in the days and weeks ahead.

Stay well.

Mark McLaughlin
Superintendent