

Dear Merrimack Families and District Staff~

Most days in the Merrimack School District since our transition to remote learning have for us, like for so many of you, revolved around a steady stream of meetings. A few months ago I had not heard of Zoom, and now it appears I can't live without it! Weekly district leadership meetings, a unique and longstanding tradition in Merrimack, have given way to twice weekly meetings at a minimum, and frequently more than that. Today, as with the past many days over the past many weeks, the focus of our meetings was on planning. The list of things to plan for and consider is long, and grows by the day. The particular challenge of recent days, as we move closer to the end of school, is to plan for our immediate future, which is more or less known and understood, and for our longer term future, which is filled with unknowns. Nevertheless, regardless of the massive uncertainty that still lies before us, we must move confidently toward our future as a school district, doing the best planning we can with what we know, armed with the knowledge of what we have learned through this crisis, and informed by our aspirations for the success of all our students moving forward.

None of us can be certain what the future will bring given the current environment, and therefore none of us can be certain about what schooling will look like in the aftermath of this crisis, whenever that comes. But we can be certain of one thing; the safety, health, well being and success of all our students will be at the forefront of all our planning, both in the immediate and the more distant future. No matter what the circumstances of this terribly challenging situation do to school operations moving forward, I am certain of this; all that we have learned as a result of this experience about teaching and learning, about flexibility and innovation, about what is possible and achievable will inform every decision we make going forward. To be sure, we've learned plenty, as well, about what can and must be done better, more efficiently, more consistently, and more responsively. Those lessons will inform our future decision-making too.

Tomorrow, there will be many more meetings. We will develop many more plans. And we will march forward. But with each passing day I believe that all of us, in the school district, in our families, and in our own selves, in our own ways, are getting better at dealing with and responding to this crisis. And that fact should give us confidence to accept and even embrace whatever challenges lie before us.

Stay well.

Mark McLaughlin
Superintendent