

Dear Merrimack Families~

I am writing to provide you with a brief update concerning the state and district response to COVID-19. At 1:00 today, Governor Sununu announced that schools in New Hampshire will be afforded one week to plan for remote instruction in the case of schools that have closed, or will soon close, due to COVID-19. In that announcement, the governor also encouraged community members/parents to reach out to local school leaders for additional information. While that is a perfectly reasonable suggestion, I am writing to share information about how we will need to be handling public requests for information over the next few weeks.

1. Returning individual phone calls/emails from parents/community members is always a top priority for us, but it is likely that this will get harder to achieve over the coming days as we work to develop and implement plans for providing instruction to Merrimack students during the period of school closure. That effort will consume most of our time over the coming weeks. However, that does not mean that your questions are not important or that they do not deserve answers. Therefore, we will attempt to collect questions each day, sent to us through email, voice mail or other means, and address them in daily updates that I will provide. In addition, whenever we receive updated information from NH DHHS, NH DOE and CDC, we will pass those along to you as well. We will use the following platforms for broad-based communication: FACEBOOK, School Messenger, district and school based websites. During this time, we have two goals—planning for optimum student learning under extremely unusual conditions, and communicating vital information to our families and community members, all of whom have real and valid questions.
2. Many parents have asked about the impact this closure will have on the end of school and high school graduation. In typical situations, here is how that works: if a school district exceeded the typical five days allotted for weather related school cancellations, for example, the district could and would apply to the NH DOE for a waiver to allow schools to be excused from “making up” those additional days. In other words, the issue of waiving lost days due to cancellations is a NH DOE responsibility. I am sure that in the coming days NH DOE Commissioner Edelblut will be providing further guidance to school districts about this and, of course, I will pass along any additional clarification I receive that addresses this important question.
3. Irrespective of the governor’s announcement today, planning is already underway among Merrimack administrators and teachers for the delivery of remote instruction to our students. As indicated in an earlier message to the community, we will be sharing more details on Tuesday afternoon about how the district plans to implement this model of instructional delivery. Clearly, whatever plan we implement will not be perfect and will not be problem or error free. However, working in partnership with our families, with whom we share the challenge of these next few weeks, I am confident that we will work through these challenges for the benefit of our students.

As always, thank you for your patience and understanding as we work through this very unique situation.

Sincerely,

Mark McLaughlin
Superintendent