

Dear Merrimack Families and District Staff~

At last night's special meeting of the Merrimack School Board, the District Leadership Team joined me in providing the board with a promised late October update and accompanying recommendation concerning next steps in school and district operations in the midst of the on-going pandemic.

To summarize, our recommendation last night was to maintain school and district operations as currently constructed-continuing with hybrid and remote options for students with an allowance for switching options under specific conditions as outlined in the **Change of Hybrid/Remote Status Form** found in the Spotlight Section of each school's website.

Please visit our District website and/or each school's website to access the PowerPoint that accompanied last night's presentation. It provides significant detail concerning the factors that contributed to the recommendation as well as information to help our community and staff better understand the conditions that might require potential future school or district closure as a result of COVID-19.

Following that update and recommendation, each principal provided specific information about the ways in which our schools are continuing to learn from our experiences in hybrid and remote instruction and the ways in which we are adjusting and refining our practices in order to provide a continually improving experience for all our learners. In addition, Director of Student Services, Heather Barker, provided information concerning the District's continued efforts to seek ways to address the needs of students on IEPs and 504s at all times and particularly in light of possible future school closures. Finally, our REAL (Remote Education Academy for Learning) Coordinator, Bill Morris, provided information concerning his efforts to address the unique needs and challenges of students and teachers who are learning and working remotely during this on-going pandemic. Merrimack is one of the very few districts in the state, if not the only district in the state, who has designated a specific leader to oversee the remote education of its students. The impact of this position, and Mr. Morris specifically, on the remote experience for students and staff has been significant, and will continue to grow over time.

This pandemic has had a tremendous impact on all of us, but especially our students, whose learning has been disrupted for far too long. As we head into the long winter, with cold and flu season further complicating the already complicated educational environment, we have tried to stay true to our dual missions: to provide the best education for our students that we can given the current circumstances and to do so in as safe and responsible a manner as possible. Every effort, every day, is focused on achieving both goals. At last night's meeting, however, we sought to describe the ways in which we seek to exceed those goals, by learning to improve the educational experience of our students and to enhance, wherever possible, the conditions of health and safety within which our outstanding students learn and our dedicated and tireless staff work.

Once again, I offer genuine thanks to our Merrimack students, their families, and all our staff for contributing so meaningfully to the community response to this huge challenge.

Respectfully,

Mark McLaughlin  
Superintendent