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A school and community partnership that provides an inclusive, respectful, and collaborative learning environment where all stakeholders are engaged in the development of the whole child.

March 27, 2020

Dear WPS Parents/Guardians,

By now you have undoubtedly heard, Governor Baker has extended the period of school closures in Massachusetts through until at least Monday, May 4, 2020 due to the ongoing health crisis. I can assure you that this is difficult news for us all, both as parents and as educators. While this announcement is, at least, now providing us with a longer term view of how long we will be closed, it certainly still leaves wide open the uncertainty, anxiety and growing concern we have about our welfare, well-being and how long it might be until we can return to some degree of normalcy in our lives. As a parent of two children myself and now working remotely, I know first-hand that it is not easy trying to navigate this, all while also trying to institute some structure and routine.

To this point in our school closure, WPS has assembled a vast array of wonderful resources, web links and ideas to help support the continual engagement of students which can be found on the WPS district homepage at <https://www.wpsk12.com/>. Our efforts have been largely consistent with most other districts following the guidance previously given around the appropriateness in providing *enrichment* activities. This has, and continues to be, an important distinction with that of online learning that I realize has become more problematic as of late and many taking vastly different approaches.

Simply stated we, along with most that I know, are not positioned to offer actual online learning experiences where student work is given, graded, tested and evaluated. There are many obstacles and barriers to this including, but not limited to, access to such things as technology (i.e. whether that be an actual device or residing in a home with hi-speed internet access) to the reality that many of our students require additional support from specialized services to appropriately engage in such learning. Thus, while we were not positioned to offer online learning before March 16th when schools were ordered closed, we are no more closer to this ability now only two weeks later.

Understanding well the larger need to provide guidance on all of this, the Commissioner of Education issued information to all superintendents and districts yesterday on *remote learning* during this COVID-19 school closure. This document can be found here:

<http://www.doe.mass.edu/sfs/emergencyplan/covid19.html>

This was approved by multiple stakeholder group include the *Massachusetts Association of School Committees (MASC)*, the *Massachusetts Association School Superintendents (MASS)*, the *Massachusetts Parent Teacher Association (MPTA)* and the *Massachusetts Teachers Association (MTA)*.

Notice of Non-Discrimination

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Now that the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) has released these *guiding principles* for remote learning we, like every other district, now have the significant challenge ahead as we try to quickly figure out the WPS plan for all of this to best meet the needs of all student and families (I wish there was one template for all districts, but there is not!) With this guidance now in hand, I will be working closely with our educational leaders and staff, as well as our School Committee members and association leadership, to develop a plan as quickly as possible that will allow us to pass through these coming weeks in a way that fosters our efforts to:

Continue to focus on the holistic needs of our community and, most importantly, our students
Offer a learning model that meaningfully engages students in productive learning opportunities
Provides for the opportunity to reinforce skills already taught while offering the chance to apply and deepen these skills

Finally, I am pleased to be able to share with you an attached letter jointly developed by my colleagues within the Middlesex Valley League of School Superintendents. As you will see, this statement underscores our collective commitment to the important work before us.

As always, and especially in these times, I thank you for your patience, support and understanding in these challenging times.

Sincerely,

Glenn Brand
Superintendent of Schools

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