

School Closure Update

March 30, 2020

Folks, I hope you and your respective families are well and healthy. I simply wanted to give you an update as of today.

Thank You

A big thank you to the over thirty volunteers who assisted in delivering over 360 packets to Maywood homes this past Saturday morning. Administrators, teachers, paraprofessionals, substitutes, BOE members and many more helped and we were able to deliver everything before noon. Thanks to one and all.

Timeline

As noted in the Governor's statement last week that the closure will be his decision, and now with the President's reclassification of the mitigation time period to that of April 30th, I do not foresee us returning to school any time sooner than April 30th at the very least. The good news is that you are all hitting this out of the park so our kids will benefit. The bad news is that this is not what school was meant to be and the social/emotional piece that we are all missing will again be delayed. I will keep you up to date with any continued information.

Spring Break

Spring Break has not changed. The week of April 6th is our spring break. This year's spring break motto is POWER DOWN!!

School Business

School business is taking place even though our normal working environment has changed.

- BOE meetings continue as per the schedule
 - Our budget was sent to the county and we will have follow up meetings according to guidelines by the end of April
 - New teacher interviews for our rock star teacher and principal retirees are taking place via Zoom
 - The calendar for the 20-21 school year will be finalized by the end of this month
- And much more.

Field Trips

I will be meeting with advisors shortly to map out a game plan with the information we currently have. Day trips and overnight field trips are a highlight of the end of the year at both schools. We will be sensitive to trying to keep things scheduled but will work with the information as deadlines approach to make rational decisions.

NJDOE Website dedicated to all things School Closure

<https://www.nj.gov/education/topics/>

In closing, I shared this with our great staff today. Although directed towards the staff, much if not all is parent related as well. Have a great night and please stay safe and healthy.

Michael Jordan

Just some thoughts

Any of this sound familiar? Stress of preparing for the unknown, the anxiety of constant news and social media coverage, the disruption to schedules and daily routines, and the obsession with finding resources?

Stop and Breathe

Stop and take a deep breath. I don't know if you even realize how much stress you are under right now. You are in crisis mode and the instinct to fight is kicking in whether you know it or not. You need to stop for just a second and breathe. I think we are in this for the long haul and you can't keep going at this pace. You need to take care of yourself and pace yourself so that you can be there for your students and your family. It's ok to stop for a minute.

Less is More

In the following days as we see that this will be longer than anticipated, remember that less is more. Give yourself permission to not follow your pacing guide. Identify your key outcomes and work backwards. What are your expectations for what they really need to know and be able to do by the end of this year? And then what learning activities are the most essential to get them there?

Fewer Websites/Platforms and Resources

Every minute you are spending trying to learn the “best” website/platform for a particular task is time not spent on making critical decisions about your content. Choose a few solid websites/platforms and resources to focus on. You may not be using the “perfect” platform but when all this is over, you will have time to learn and become proficient with all these awesome sites you are seeing.

Smaller Pieces

Remember we are focusing on the most important learning that needs to occur, and it is all about quality not quantity. You don’t have to manage a 45-minute class online so a 45-minute lesson plan is not required.

Communication

The more you and your students communicate, the more engaged we will be. To keep students engaged in an online environment you need to communicate in a variety of ways and often. Use this time to get to know your students better and let them get to know you. Hopefully, when this is over and you are back in your classrooms with your students, your sense of community will have become even deeper.

Feedback

Refocus on the value of individual feedback. In virtual school we have to give feedback if we expect students to advance. Feedback is where the real learning takes place in an online environment.

Creativity

Tap in to their creativity and give open ended assignments and projects that allow students to learn something or try something new.

Patience & Kindness

There is an entirely different set of skills needed to engage and teach online. Don't expect to be the highly effective teacher that you are in the classroom. Be patient with yourself and let yourself just be "okay" for now. It gets easier and you will get better. Don't compare yourself to anyone. Be patient and kind to your students (and their parents). This isn't easy for them either. Even under these ideal circumstances virtual learning is challenging. Now add working parents, younger siblings, stressed families, computer/internet challenges, multiple teachers not all using the same websites and platforms, etc. to the equation and you will realize why you need to lower your expectations a little. None of this is normal and we can't act like it is. So, please, do your best and expect that your students are doing theirs, but understand that there is much more going on here in everyone's lives than just your class.

Many of One

Teaching online really forces us to teach to every student. We get to know each student as an individual. We learn more about their families, their struggles, and their successes. It changes the way we look at them and it gives them the opportunity to see you as a person, not just a teacher.

Hang in there.

