



March 31, 2020

**Covid19 #8 STAFF**

Dear WTPS Staff,

I want to begin by stating how incredibly impressed I have been with the work all of you have contributed to this effort. Less than a month ago, no remote learning plan existed. We were confronted with the prospect of closing our doors and coming up with a way to continue to educate our students. We accomplished that together in about 1 week and put it into action the following week. Now we have a little over 2 weeks under our belt with no real end in sight. I know that is terribly discouraging, but we have begun to accomplish something that many folks thought impossible. That is truly outstanding and a testament to all of you as educators and the great caretakers of the youth of this country and our community. Simply REMARKABLE.

I imagine many of you wonder about how impactful this remote learning really is. I, like you, agree that this can never take the place of what it is we do in our classrooms, but what we are doing now is critical in more ways than you can imagine. The phrase has been overused, but it is accurate to say these are unprecedented times. I can think of no time that such a thing has happened in our history and yet we have found incredible ways to cope and respond. The work that you are doing each day has not only kept our kids involved with their education, but your efforts provide a sense of normalcy that otherwise would be even harder to find. You give them purpose and engage them in ways that keep their mind occupied on positive thoughts. This to me is so critically important, which is why I continue to ask you to find ways to connect with our kids and one another in positive ways that help to lift spirits. I know there are many students that cannot wait to hear from you.

The countless videos of staff reaching out to say hello and to give a voice to hope and future days of happiness are heartwarming and effective. I encourage you to keep going.

I also want to personally thank the many of you who have offered to volunteer to help prepare and distribute meals and laptops, or the many remarkable things I am hearing about our staff within the community for making surgical masks, providing food delivery to the elderly, or just the latest social media post that makes us laugh. The way all of you have come together in this great time of need continues to make me so proud.

Below is a listing of topics regarding decisions about grading, spring break, final exams, and grading procedures that I wanted to share with all of you. There have been hours of discussion on these topics, and I realize this decisions will not be welcome by everyone, yet decisions must be made, and as always, I will continue to make decisions that I believe are in the best interest of our kids, our staff, and our community.

## **Spring Break**

Spring break will go on as planned. Our staff, our students, our parents, and our support staff who are working tirelessly to get meals and technology out to our students, need time to recharge their batteries. Our kids and teachers can use this time to catch up. This new learning environment is a challenge for all, and this break will afford us the opportunity to take a deep breath, catch up where we need to, and spend time with one another without dealing with the challenges that remote learning has presented to our students, staff, and parents .

Most importantly, I believe that if we are given the opportunity to return to school, then preserving as many days in a normal environment for our kids to come back to is the right thing to do.

Therefore, school functions will cease on Friday April 10<sup>th</sup> and will resume on Monday April 20<sup>th</sup>.

## **3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Marking Periods**

The 3<sup>rd</sup> marking period is being extended to Thursday April 9<sup>th</sup>. This is an increase of only 2 days but will allow us to finish with the beginning of Spring Break. The 4<sup>th</sup> Marking period will commence on Monday April 20<sup>th</sup>.

## **Grading at the Secondary Level**

While in this environment, we have decided to institute a grading floor for the third marking period. Students who complete the marking period with a numerical average of less than 60 should receive a final 3<sup>rd</sup> marking period grade of 60. We believe that this is critical to keep our students engaged throughout the remaining time we have in the remote environment. We also think this is critical should we return to school before the year concludes, we will not be leaving any of them behind.

## **Grading at the Elementary Level**

Mrs. Gerber will be sending a more detailed letter tomorrow regarding grading at the elementary level.

## **Final Exams**

All final exams are suspended for the 2019/20 school year. The semester average for students at the secondary level will be the combined average of the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Marking Periods.

## **Remote Learning Window**

We are asking for your continued patience and flexibility with our remote learning platform. We are expanding the window for communication for our teachers to students and parents until 9:30 AM. We had asked our staff to have the day's work and information to our parents and students by 9:00 AM, but after 2 weeks in this environment, we find it necessary to open the window up a little further.

It is critical that we all remain flexible, understanding, and communicative during this period. Finding the correct balance in recognition of the immense responsibilities we all share right now is critical to our social and emotional well-being.

## **Last Day of School 2019/20**

The official last day for all staff and students will be **Thursday June 18, 2020**.

Please remember to visit our COVID19 district information page which can be found here:

<https://www.wtps.org/site/Default.aspx?PageID=29460>

In my letter to parents this evening I told them that I am very aware of the added stress this has placed on all of them as parents. I realize that this applies to all of you as well. However, if we continue to communicate with kindness and consideration, we can manage these challenges and overcome them together. There is nothing we cannot do together.

My continued admiration and thanks to you all.

Stay Safe!

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Joseph N. Bollendorf". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Joseph N. Bollendorf, Superintendent