

KEYSTONE SCHOOL DISTRICT

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March 24, 2020

RE: District-wide Update & Extension of School Closure

Dear Parents/Guardians, Students & Staff:

First, I'd like to thank you for your patience and understanding as we navigate through these uncharted territories together. We recognize that everyone has been deeply affected by this pandemic and subsequent school closure. The physical, emotional, and economic pain that our community is experiencing adds an unprecedented amount of stress and anxiety to your situation.

We are working as quickly as we can to provide accurate, meaningful information. Like you, we are constantly seeking additional information as it relates to school district operations and student learning opportunities. We are often being provided new information at the same time it's being released to the public. School leaders are not receiving advanced notice of school closure announcements from the Governor's Office.

I understand you have many, many questions and concerns about school operations and the remainder of SY 2019-20. I'll do my best to address some of those questions within the context of this letter. With that said, it's important to remember this situation is rapidly evolving. There will be many more *changes* and many more *questions*.

Extended School Closure

The Governor announced yesterday afternoon that all schools in the Commonwealth will remain closed through at least April 6 as a result of the COVID-19 response efforts. **Under the new timeline, school buildings will reopen for students on April 9.** Staff, however, will return to work on **April 7** to prepare for continued operations. This is a tentative plan, with many health experts suggesting there may be further delay.

The Pennsylvania Department of Education will allow for an extension of the school year up to June 30, 2020 as well as waivers that will permit the school district to account for instructional *hours* instead of instructional *days*. More information to follow.

Continuity of Instruction

The subject of *Continuity of Instruction* seems to be the most widely perplexing issue among school districts. During the school closure, the Keystone School District is not presently offering mandatory planned courses of instruction. We are working to update web links for students and parents on the school websites, however, no assignments will be distributed, monitored or graded for completion.

With the extension of the school closure through April 8, we will revisit our efforts to provide *voluntary activities* for students/parents to access from home in a format that is conducive to your situation. I've received several inquiries about transitioning to an online, distance learning model. In short, that's not possible for the entirety of the Keystone School District. Access to high speed Internet provides barriers to full-scale cyber immersion. For those individuals who have access, the wide variety of devices (and the lack of personal devices for every student) makes it near impossible to provide a meaningful learning format. Additionally, school districts in Pennsylvania currently have no legal ability to offer mandatory online instruction on a district-wide model that would count toward the 180 days of instruction.

We understand the desire to keep students engaged in their learning—we share that desire as a school community. We are committed to working within the confines of the law—and aggressive COVID-19 response efforts—to further develop voluntary activities. Currently, our school-level websites have a host of supplemental activities posted under the Student and/or Parent Resource links. More information to follow.

State Assessment

All standardized tests (*PSSAs, Keystones, NOCTI, NIMS*) have been cancelled for the remainder of the 2019-20 school year.

Concerns About Grades & Outstanding Assignments

Many parents/guardians and students have expressed concerns about collection of outstanding assignments and final grades for the 3rd Quarter. We understand the stress and anxiety associated with these issues. **In short, please understand that during the closure, no assignments are being collected or graded.** There is no mandatory instruction taking place for any K-12 student. Our team is working on response efforts to the changing landscape of information being provided to K-12 public schools. While we understand the dramatic impact this closure has had on our entire school community, students will not be penalized as a result of the closure. There is no question that some topics and content areas will be affected, especially if the closure is further extended. We will work to identify those skill areas and adjust plans to ensure adequate content exploration/coverage as best we can. When we are permitted to resume operations, classroom grade books will be updated to reflect current grades.

Seniors – The Class of 2020

We understand the unique challenges that pertain to our district’s senior class. As previously stated, the Pennsylvania Department of Education will allow for an extension of the school year up to June 30, 2020 as well as waivers that will permit the school district to account for instructional *hours* instead of instructional *days*. We expect this will include waivers for Career Center hours. No senior, in good standing, will be prevented from graduating this school year. In all likelihood, the school year will be extended into June in an effort to preserve as much instructional opportunity as possible for our district’s students. There is no “one size fits all” approach to this unfortunate situation. Consequently, we will work with our students individually to ensure they are prepared to move forward to the next phase of their lives (workforce, higher education, military commitment, etc.).

Meal Service During Mandatory School Closure

The Keystone School District will continue providing FREE meal service to all students, ages 18 and under, during the mandatory school closure. Meals are being served on Tuesdays and Fridays from 11:00 a.m. until 12:30 p.m.

Miscellaneous

Will we have graduation ceremonies? When will they be? Will we have a prom? When can we perform the musical? Will field trips be rescheduled? What about athletics? And many, many more...

We will address all of these questions once we have definitive and accurate information to provide. I’ve heard the statement “This isn’t fair!” many times over the last few weeks. I recognize that many of you are dealing with individual and collective sacrifices caused by this pandemic. Our priority is to remain focused on the health, safety and welfare of our school community. I’m grateful to all of you on the front lines of this pandemic, especially those of you involved in health care and supply chain management. Our thoughts are with you. Please stay well.

Sincerely,



Shawn Algoe, Superintendent