



April 21, 2020

Dear Parents, Students, Staff and Horseheads Community,

On behalf of everyone in the district, I hope you are all doing well and staying as safe as possible. Our schools have been closed now for five weeks, and thanks to all of you, learning continues. I want to extend our sincere appreciation to students, parents, and staff for your hard work during this time – from the review phase when we first dismissed students to the online instruction occurring now. I know it has been challenging with technology, connectivity, and learning the platforms we are using. As we shared last week, Governor Cuomo has extended his order closing schools until at least May 15. We do not know for sure when we will be able to reopen our schools. Therefore, we are now preparing for the next phase of our dismissal, in which we extend remote learning and assess progress. We continue to follow state guidelines, and we will continue to support you as we navigate these unprecedented times together.

The next two weeks will be a time for students, teachers, and families to continue to work on remote learning and new instructional material. We are all working to find a balance between online instruction and offline work to keep students moving forward with their learning without becoming overwhelmed, and we understand that this is not easy. We ask that during this time to please make sure students are attending and completing their work as much as they can. Students in grades 7-12 should work closely with their teachers and reach out to them if there are issues or concerns. Parents of students in grades PreK-6 are asked to communicate with your students' teachers if there are frustrations and/or concerns so that we can address needs and help students be successful in their learning. Just as we ask when school is in session, if concerns remain after communicating with teachers, please contact your building principal.

Beginning Monday, May 4, we will transition to assessed instruction, which means we must measure progress. We are working to make this transition as seamless as possible, having addressed issues that arose during this feedback period of April 13 through May 1. From May 4 until we reopen our buildings, students will continue to learn through online instruction and offline work, with our teachers and district supporting families in that learning. Assignments will be graded and counted towards a marking period grade.

We have been having conversations regarding our annual special events to recognize achievement and honor our students. We know that these events are important to students, families, and staff, and we pledge to do all we can to come up with a plan that addresses the challenges of physical distancing and large gatherings. We must protect safety first and foremost, but we are doing all we can to preserve these milestones for our students, especially our seniors. We will need to make some difficult decisions in the weeks ahead. Our goal is that we will have a graduation ceremony for the Class of 2020 that keeps everyone safe while honoring this special group of students. We also hope to be able to offer some sort of summer programs for students, and once we know more, we will share this information.

We wish to thank you for your positive feedback and for sharing concerns. I know I speak on behalf of our entire team when I say we appreciate the communication so that we may continue what is working and address concerns in a constructive way. We certainly know there are challenges and we will promise to work as swiftly as possible on the issues that arise. All - students, teachers, parents, administrators - are doing their best, both at home and throughout the district. We are indeed "Raider strong."

Once again, I wish to thank everyone in our school and community for your continued vigilance, support, and care for our students and for each other.

Stay Safe, Stay Home, Be Well.

Sincerely,

Dr. Thomas J. Douglas
Superintendent of Schools