



April 7, 2020

Dear Horseheads Parents, Students, Staff, and Community Members,

As we shared Monday, Governor Cuomo has now closed schools through April 29. In Horseheads, if there is not a further extension, we would have teachers and staff return to school on April 29 and students on April 30. There very well could be another extension, but we do not know at this time. Please continue to look for more information. As you know, the situation can change daily.

Also on Monday, we learned that the Board of Regents will soon announce the cancellation of all June 2020 Regents exams. I know this brings up many questions. We are awaiting further guidance on how this will affect several items, including credits, graduation requirements, and August Regents exams. Once we receive and review this upcoming guidance from the state, we will share this with our school community. I know many in our community, especially our seniors, are very concerned about many activities, including proms, school events, concerts, athletics, final exams, graduation, and summer school. The truth is, until we know definitively when we will return to school, we cannot yet answer these questions. We continue to plan for the 'what-ifs,' but we ask your patience as we await the end of the restrictions when the situation is safe. I know we all want our students to have the important milestones in their educational experience, so we will explore everything we possibly can do to safely meet this goal, once we have final guidance from the state and health departments.

We need everyone's help if we are going to reach the above goal for our students and community. We must do what our health department and local leaders are saying daily: **stay home, go out only for necessities, and send only one person, if possible, to limit exposure.** Our community, especially the most vulnerable, need us all to do our part and isolate at home. There have been some congregations at schools, fields, basketball and tennis courts. I know most are trying to keep their distance, but that is not always happening. Therefore, we are closing all school sites (except for construction and maintenance), covering and removing nets on our basketball courts, and locking down our tennis courts in order to show that they are closed. Please understand that we must take these actions to comply with what health experts are telling us. Such actions could help bring a swifter resolution to the situation and allow us to resume normal operations sooner.

Later this week, we will be sending another district-wide communication to parents and guardians to guide you and your students in accessing work during our extended dismissal. This communication will address specific instructions for addressing home education. I know this is not easy on parents and guardians, nor on our students, but please know that our teachers and staff are working very hard this week to make this as simple and complete as possible. For our parents/guardians of special needs students, our Student Services Director Kelly Squires will be sending information that includes direction on accessing materials and other services involved with your students' educational program.

I would like to thank our parents and guardians for working so hard during this very difficult time to assist your children with their learning, while at the same time keeping your families cared for and your households functioning. I know that many have questions and concerns. We appreciate your reaching out to us with questions, and we ask that you please be specific as well as polite in your messages. We are all working to do the best we can for our students and community during very trying times. Thank you to all our district parents, grandparents, families, and community members for your patience, support, and encouragement to our students. This has been outstanding and much appreciated.

I am proud to be the superintendent of this great district and I want to extend my sincere appreciation to all our staff, across the entire district, for making the transition to home instruction possible in such a short time. There are many behind the scenes that you may or may not know who have given their absolute 24/7 commitment to our students and community during the past three weeks. I am so proud of all of you.

I know I speak for our entire staff and the Board of Education when I tell you that we all miss our kids and our daily routines. We will get back to some semblance of normalcy, if you can call it that, and it will be great to see everyone again in person.

Sincerely,

Dr. Thomas J. Douglas
Superintendent of Schools