



March 26, 2020

Dear Horseheads Parents/Guardians, Students, Staff and Community:

I am writing today with an update on the district's extended dismissal due to the global health pandemic, now in its second week. First and foremost, I wish to thank you all for your understanding and support as we face this challenge together. Our instructional and non-instructional staff miss seeing and working with your children. The images I have seen across the district and the stories I have heard from students, parents, and teachers are heartwarming and just amazing. The true character of our Horseheads community certainly shines through in these moments of crisis.

This change to our daily routine weighs heavily on our entire community, especially when it comes to assisting with basic needs for our students and families. The district has worked steadfastly to ensure that we supply food resources for our children in need. Our food service, transportation, and maintenance have made sure that those needing assistance have a place to pick up meals daily or, if they cannot get to a site, get meals delivered. If you know of someone in need, please encourage them to give us a call at 739-5601, x4260 or x4295 so that we can help.

Many have asked about how to best talk to their children about COVID-19 and this situation in general. I know I have been challenged in trying to help my own son understand why we are where we are. Here is a resource for those conversations: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/schools-childcare/talking-with-children.html>. Our district website also has a great deal of information, including a link of resources from our school psychologists: <https://horseheadsdistrict.com/covid-19info.cfm>.

If you are a parent of a student in grades PreK-4, you should have received packets of material in the mail. Principals and teachers of students in grades 5-12 have sent emails with materials and resources for completing work during this time. All of these materials and resources are on our website. If you haven't received the materials, or if you have questions about them, please contact your teacher or building principal. We are also working to ensure that we are ready to provide further instruction for our students if the governor extends school closures beyond spring break.

As you may know, the state has suspended administration of grade 3-8 state assessments for the remainder of the school year. Additionally, High School Advanced Placement (AP) exams will be administered online. To date, we have not heard news on June Regents examinations from the State Education Department, but we expect to soon. I've heard from many students directly – from questions about activities to needing assistance with supplies. I welcome these questions and contacts so please, contact me anytime at tdouglas@horseheadsdistrict.com.

We are also expecting information from the state on the 2020-21 state budget and school budget votes. April is a key month for the development of the budget and preparation for the budget vote. This pandemic will have a deep effect on our economy, and that will in turn affect our state aid. We await guidance from the state on how we proceed from here.

We will pass along information we receive from the Governor's Office and State Education Department. In the meantime, on behalf of the Board of Education and my administrative team, I thank you again for all you are doing. This is not easy on any of us, but we will get through this together. We all must do our part as New Yorkers, as Americans, as citizens of the world to help stop the spread of this virus. Remember to keep distancing measures in place, wash those hands, and cover those coughs and sneezes. Soon we will be back together. Please stay inside as much as possible, and stay safe.

Sincerely,

Dr. Thomas J. Douglas, Superintendent of Schools