



April 1, 2020

Dear Horseheads Families, Staff, and Community:

I hope this finds you and your family well. As we announced last week, Governor Cuomo has extended our student dismissal through at least April 15. The governor also ordered that in order for schools to be relieved of the state's 180 school day requirement, all districts must continue to operate through their scheduled spring break days and use any remaining scheduled vacation days as days in session until the end of the school year (except for contractual and federal holidays). In other words, in order to receive our state aid, we must continue to operate and provide educational programs, food services, and child care referral services for emergency personnel and first responders throughout what would have been our Spring Break (April 3-10) and beyond. Please note that Friday, April 10 is a contractual holiday and must be observed as a day off for staff and students. Our meal distribution program will not run on April 10, but we will provide extra food items for students in need on Thursday, April 9. Additionally, we must also remove the extra holiday at Memorial Day on May 22 and work as we would normally up until the end of the school year. This is what we know now. I hope it helps everyone plan for the next couple of months.

During the next few weeks, students should continue on their review and reinforcement work provided by their teachers. This will help to prepare them for their transition to new work, which we will be moving to on April 13. Our teachers will be preparing work to be shared with students and families for this next phase of our dismissal. So that you are aware, this work will be different from the work initially sent home; this material will be new content, not just review and reinforcement of previous knowledge and skills. The new content your child's teachers provide will continue throughout our dismissal, as ordered by the Governor.

The district will be using two electronic platforms – Microsoft Teams and/or Google Classroom – for students to engage in this initial content with teachers. We understand that not all families have the access, broadband, or devices necessary to learn in a virtual environment. My colleagues are working on addressing these areas to ensure all students have the tools necessary to continue learning this school year. Materials will also be made available in hard copy if necessary. In the next week, a letter will go home to students and parents providing further information on this next phase and the technology assistance the district will provide to families.

We have also been collecting questions from the school community regarding our extended dismissal. Our website will have a Q&A page of the most frequently asked questions. More questions and answers will be posted as we receive them. Please do not hesitate to send me questions, concerns, thoughts, or ideas on the education of our community's children ([tdouglas@horseheadsdistrict.com](mailto:tdouglas@horseheadsdistrict.com)).

I know that this is challenging for everyone and it has caused great anxiety. Please remind yourself that you are doing the best you can, as we all are, to ensure that we return from this as a stronger and healthier Horseheads community and family. Thank you all for being so supportive and rising to the needs of our students and community every day. Please let me know if you are having difficulties and we will work to get you the support that we can, as fast as we can. Email me or give me a call at 739-5601, x4201.

Remember we are your school district,

We are #raiderstrong, and

We will do all that we can to take care of our entire community.

Stay safe, stay home, and be well!

Sincerely,

Dr. Thomas J. Douglas  
Superintendent of Schools