March 16, 2020

Dear Hastings Families and Colleagues,

Today, Westchester County Executive George Latimer declared a state of emergency in Westchester County due to the spread of the COVID-19 coronavirus. Included in his executive orders is a closure of all schools for 14 days. The intention of this closure is to help mitigate the spread of the virus in our schools. After discussions with county and health officials, and based on guidance from the CDC, the Hastings-on-Hudson schools will have an extended closure through March 31, 2020.

As the details of the State and Federal strategy addressing the coronavirus continue to emerge, their recommendations are likely to change. Therefore, families should prepare for the potential of longer school closures and we need to ask for your continued flexibility and patience. Information regarding any potential changes to this year’s District calendar will be shared in as timely a manner as is possible. Our current priority is to focus on providing on-going learning and supporting the well-being of our school community.

We want to share with you that the student mentioned in yesterday’s community update attends the high school. Our medical director confirmed that the student has been quarantined and will be tested. Again, we share this news, hoping for the best recovery for the student’s relatives. As of today, we have not received confirmation from the New York State Department of Health that a child or staff member has tested positive for the COVID-19-Coronavirus. Out of an abundance of caution, we disinfected and sanitized our schools. School buildings will reopen on Wednesday with limited access.

In the Hastings-on-Hudson schools, we remain dedicated to serving the educational needs of our students. In doing so, we have developed the plans outlined below to support student learning while children are at home. Please be reminded that during the school closures, all athletic and extracurricular activities are canceled.
Child Care for Physicians and First Responders
Today, we were asked by the County Executive’s Office to provide childcare to the families of physicians and first responders starting Wednesday, March 18, 2020. Administrators are meeting with Melissa Szymanski tomorrow to ensure that PreK-12-year-old children are provided childcare from 8:00am-6:00pm, Monday-Friday during the extended closing. Specific details will be shared with these families tomorrow.

Continuation of Learning from Home
We recognize that the use of Google Classroom to provide continued instruction is not a replacement for face-to-face instruction, but it does provide an opportunity for students to continue to be engaged in their learning during this time of crisis. The use of Google Classroom will officially start on Wednesday, March 18, 2020. If you have any questions related to your child’s use of Google Classroom, please email your child’s teacher, principal or assistant principal. Teachers will post their office hours on Google Classroom which is when they are available to correspond to students and parents. If you have trouble logging on to your child’s Google account, please email Christian Fadul at fadulc@hohschools.org. He will be happy to assist you.

Child Nutrition Program
Our food service providers will prepare food items for our students who qualify for free and reduced lunch as well as any of our families who are food insecure. Breakfast and lunch can be picked up in the Hastings High School lobby starting Wednesday, March 18, 2020, between the hours of 9:30am-11:00am. If you are unable to come to the school please email Maureen Caraballo at caraballom@hohschools.org to make other arrangements. As announced yesterday, we will also distribute Foodtown gift cards, provided through grants from the Hastings PTSA, Family to Family and the Youth Council, to families who participate in the free and reduced breakfast and lunch program. Donations can be made to Family-to-Family. More information is available here. We thank these organizations for their generosity. Maureen Caraballo, our Business Official, will be able to issue these gift cards to families on Wednesday, March 18, 2020, and will be in contact with families. We apologize in advance for any hardship or inconvenience to you.

We also recognize that students and families may need emotional support during this very difficult time. If you are experiencing anxiety or stress and you feel you need support, please call the Department of Community Mental Health office at (914) 995-1900. In addition, the District’s mental health professionals will be available to support you and your children. Counselors can be reached via email or by dialing 914-478-6260 for Hastings High School; 914-478-6228 for Farragut Middle School; or 914-478-6276 for Hillside Elementary School.
As always, we sincerely appreciate your continued support and understanding. Together we will get through this challenging time due to the strength of our partnership as a school community.

Warm regards,

Valerie Henning-Piedmonte