March 31, 2020

Dear Hastings Community,

Last Friday, I shared an update with the community about Governor Cuomo's Executive Order 202.11 which extended the time schools would be closed through April 15, 2020. At the time, many districts, including ours and those of neighboring towns, believed that if we did not exceed the emergency days built into the calendar, we could have spring break. This was the wrong interpretation of the Governor’s order. The Governor’s Executive Order lays out the expectation for schools to use any and all scheduled vacation days as days for continuous learning. The Deputy Secretary of Education clarified to educational leaders on Saturday, March 28, 2020, that this included the upcoming spring break week of April 6-13. For some, this is good news and others are disappointed.

We acknowledge that many families and staff members observe Good Friday and Passover that falls between April 6-13. We also understand that spring break is symbolically a time to be with friends and family. While we are directed in the Governor’s order to provide continuous learning and operate the meal and childcare programs, families and children will not be penalized for observing religious holidays. Please note that some teachers may also be observing their religious holidays and may not be available online. They will make alternative arrangements for continuous learning on these days. If we work together, we can find a middle ground.

On behalf of the Board of Education and District, I want to express our heartfelt gratitude to our employees for all that they have done and will continue to do as we navigate these challenging times together. We are equally grateful to all of the parents and guardians who have been understanding and supportive of the District. Our cooperative efforts and patience have gotten us to where we are today and we will continue our commitment to children. We look forward to seeing students back in our buildings soon. We truly miss them.

Warm regards,

Valerie Henning-Piedmonte