



Hello District families,

Now that we know our buildings are closed for the remainder of the school year and we will be using virtual learning for the remaining time, we know our students, families and staff are experiencing a multitude of feelings about not being able to reconnect in person. Please make sure you continue to make those connections in other ways. They may not be able to replace or replicate what happens every day in your buildings but they are still important.

We didn't send a family communication last week in part because we realize there is a lot going on in the lives of our students and families. We continue to remind our staff to make time for their own personal well-being and we want to encourage our students and families to do the same. As a result, this week's communication will be a little longer.

Here are the updates for Wednesday, May 6:

### **1. Is there support available for those struggling with mental health?**

The [Wisconsin Association of School Boards has a Mental Health Support and Student Services tab](#) on its website. The [Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction also has School Mental Health Resources](#) on its website.

A downside to the Safer at Home order is that children are having fewer interactions with school employees and other professionals trained to observe and mandated to report suspected child abuse. Because of this, the Department of Children and Families believes it is critical now, more than ever, for everyone [to be aware of the signs of child abuse and neglect and to know how to report those signs](#) to local welfare agencies.

### **2. Do we know what Information Days will look like in August?**

The District's planning team continues to discuss. A different format, including all virtual events or offering Information Days over more days than in the past to limit the number of people at any one session, may have to be used depending on what the state or Dane County allows. Our principals have used their monthly level meetings to brainstorm ways to make documents available online. More details will be provided as they become available.

### **3. Do we know if we will be in buildings for the start of the 2020-21 school year?**

Like most everything related to COVID-19, this is a fluid situation. We have begun developing plans for multiple scenarios, including school buildings being open with no restrictions, a blended model that includes some in-person instruction and some online instruction, and an all-virtual learning model. The same plans are also being discussed regarding summer school and how to best help our students who may not currently be engaging or need remediation help.

The state also announced that districts may be able to start before Sept. 1 for the 2020-21 school year. A committee will be flushing out all of these potential options and making recommendations to District administrators and the School Board in the coming weeks.

#### **4. How will all of the current challenges impact 2020-21 field trips?**

Staff will not be planning any field trips for the first quarter of the 2020-21 school year. Staff have also been told not to schedule any field trips for the remainder of the school year until we have clearer information about when we will return to school buildings and under what conditions.

#### **5. Please remember to practice social distancing if you are at a meal distribution site.**

All children and adults who attend the weekday meal distribution sites to pick up food or personal hygiene supplies should remain 6 feet apart from one another and staff members who are on site. In addition, we encourage you to wear masks to protect yourself and others and bring and use hand sanitizer.

#### **6. Can you share results from the virtual learning surveys?**

More than 2,960 District residents took the virtual learning survey, which was available from April 24 through May 1.

Nearly 2,000 of the respondents felt the difficulty of the instruction was just right, while nearly 1,750 believed the amount of time their child is spending with virtual learning is appropriate. More than 2,300 respondents indicated their child was spending between 1 and 4 hours with online instruction daily.

District administrators will be sharing results with principals who will then share with their respective staffs. District administrators will also be presenting information about the survey to the School Board at its meeting on Monday, May 11.

#### **7. Charter internet access offer extended.**

Charter announced it will extend free internet access through June 30. Director of Technology Services Jim Blodgett is working with Charter to get a list of District households that still need access to the internet and could benefit from this offer.

If you don't have internet access in your household, please contact your school social worker. If you want to learn more, please see the [Charter website](#).

### **8. Are there any updates on picking up personal items or dropping off materials?**

Once we know when we can return to buildings we will work on staggered drop-off and pick-up times and develop processes for personal items to be returned and library books, textbooks, musical instruments, Chromebooks, etc. to be dropped off.

This would also likely be the same time when families could get their child's locker and desk materials, yearbooks, apparel orders, etc.

### **9. Will that plan look different for members of the Class of 2020?**

Given that seniors will not return and finish sooner than other students, we will likely need a different plan to collect their items and distribute the things they need. CSCS and MHS administration are working on a plan with District administration.

In addition, our business services department will determine the timeline if graduation fees for seniors need to be refunded. This is made more challenging this year because the District is moving to a new platform for meal and activities payments and would like to have all 2020-21 students in the system by July 1.

### **10. Have you or your family members been diagnosed with COVID-19?**

If you or your family members have been diagnosed with COVID-19 and are under quarantine, please let the student services team at your child's school know so that appropriate accommodations and exemptions can be made for the student and social workers can reach out to see if you need outside resources.

We have put together a short [guide for families](#) with some resources to support your well-being.

### **11. Do you have suggestions for dealing with a meltdown?**

Psychotherapist/author Erin Leyba recently offered these tips to help children calm down, regain a sense of safety, and come to terms with their feelings in *Psychology Today*:

- Take deep breaths. Anxiety is often accompanied by rapid, shallow chest breathing. Inhaling for 3 seconds from the abdomen, holding it for 3 seconds, and exhaling through pursed lips for 3 seconds can lower heart rate and induce relaxation.
- Get active. Physically demanding tasks like wall pushups, pushing a vacuum, walking up stairs, or climbing a jungle gym can help calm and center a child.

- Make a plan. Taking specific actions can help kids understand and tolerate stress. A boy who was feeling anxious after joining a baseball team decided to chew gum and take a short walk.
- Use rituals. These can be “stability anchors” that relieve stress if they’re rolled out before, during, or after anxiety-producing events – for example, always taking a child out for ice cream after a doctor’s appointment.
- Name it to tame it. Kids can be asked to tell a story about what they’re worried or upset about and why.
- Narrow the focus. Meditating, coloring, or focusing on a specific feeling, activity, sight, or conversation can produce relaxation.
- Laugh. “Humor can distract, reframe, relax muscles, and release endorphins,” says Leyba. Try playing a goofy game, watching a cartoon, or telling family jokes.
- Reflect. After dealing successfully with a fraught episode, walk the child through what worked: On a scale of 1 to 10, how hard was it? What is one thing that helped you get through it?

## **12. Are there any updates on personal hygiene supplies distribution?**

There are two more days when personal hygiene supplies will be distributed -- on Monday, May 18 and Monday, June 1. The boxes of supplies will be available at the nine meal distribution sites around the District.

Approximately 200 boxes’ worth of supplies were distributed on April 20, the first day of the program, while 300 boxes were distributed on May 4. The Education Foundation plans to 300 boxes worth of supplies spread across the nine sites on the remaining two dates.

We will be limiting families to one box of supplies. You can’t pick up boxes for other families or your friends.

Each box will include items such as paper towel, toilet paper, cleansing wipes, dish soap, hand soap, shampoo and conditioner, toothbrushes and feminine hygiene products. To respect family privacy, we are unable to save bags for specific families. Personal hygiene bags will be available for students on a first-come, first-served basis.