



Sunday, March 15, 2020

Dear Parents, Staff, and Community,

As you know, we are in a mandatory two-week shutdown of schools. This is really challenging time for all of us, and I know there are a lot of questions. Please take time to carefully read this information. I know there are many more questions that we simply can't answer yet, but we will do our best to update you as the situation evolves. All closure-related updates will be sent via email and posted on our website.

1. Can parents and teachers access the school buildings during this closure to pick up medicine and other essential items? School nurses will be present from 8 a.m. to noon on Monday, March 16 at schools for parents to collect their children's medication and essential items such as eyeglasses that may still be in the building. We will ask parents to wait in the lobby while a nurse retrieves the medication. You will need to bring identification. To set up alternate arrangements to retrieve medication, please contact 484-266-1050 or email Pupil Services Director, Dr. Leigh Ann Ranieri, at lrnieri@wcasd.net.

2. Do I need a hard-copy learning packet for my child? Learning packets are for grades K – 5 only (broken down by grade), and are downloadable. These are not meant to replace instruction. This is simply supplemental material to use with your child. If you are able to print them at home, we ask that you do so. If you do not have the ability to do that, we are happy to provide printed packets. You can pick them up outside your child's elementary school (they will be in a bin) on Tuesday, March 17 from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. If you have a problem getting a packet and need one, please contact Director of Teaching and Learning, Dr. Tammi Florio, at tflorio@wcasd.net or call 484-266-1050. We are also providing materials for Spanish speaking families and working directly with those families. Packets will be available on our website by Monday, March 16.

3. What are we to expect over the next two weeks in terms of school work?

Monday, March 16 and Tuesday, March 17 – These are days that we have given our staff to work from home to continue to develop some online learning resources for students. We ask that you treat these two days like snow days for your children; Keep them reading, keep them engaged, keep them safe.

Wednesday, March 18; Thursday, March 19; Friday, March 20, and Monday, March 23 –

·Teachers will be providing some online learning during these days. This will vary by grade level and by teacher. We ask for your patience; These are uncharted waters and we are all doing the best we can.

·Our teachers have been asked to provide review, supplemental, and/or enrichment work. These days are not being used to replace true instruction and in most instances, teachers will not be teaching new concepts. (At the high school level where some students are already taking online classes, instruction may be able to continue.)

·We are suggesting that teachers provide no more than 4 hours of resources/activities/assignments per day, and in some instances, it may be less.

·In most cases (again high school may be the exception) students will not be required to complete materials, nor will they count toward final grades. We recognize that this is an extremely difficult situation and not all families may be able to supervise their children's work.

·For families who don't have internet access, we ask that to you work through the printed packets to the best of your ability.

·Teachers will be reaching out via email, SeeSaw, and Schoology with information, materials, and directions. Please, be patient with our teachers as many of them have children of their own to care for at home, while also trying to provide information and be accessible to student questions.

Tuesday, March 24 – Friday, March 27 – Continue to work through online materials that weren't completed earlier, read a lot of books, listen to music, and get some fresh air if possible (away from other people.) Elementary students can also log onto

your school's website and visit the "For Students" tab for links to online learning programs such as First in Math and Freckle. Again, from a parent's perspective, these are effectively 'snow days' in which no additional work will be assigned.

4. Do we have to make up these days since the governor stated that no district will be penalized for not meeting the 180-day requirement? Our official calendar has our last day of school listed as June 12. We had four snow days built into the calendar, and until now, have not used any. Before the COVID-19 outbreak, we were on track to actually finish early, with the last student of June 8, since we didn't have to use any snow days. We are now waiting for a clear interpretation from the PA Department of Education on the 180-day waiver. It may not be as simple as stated in news reports. We will NOT ask our students to make up days that they don't have to. I apologize if previous communication about this was unclear. At the same time, we need to be sure that we are following state laws. We will be sure to communicate about this as the situation evolves and we get clarification and updates.

5. How will a two-week shutdown impact graduation dates, PSSA tests, field trips, etc.? Right now, graduation is on track for the existing dates (June 3, 4, 5.) We don't know yet whether the state will waive PSSA testing and/or Keystone testing. Short term field trips have been canceled and principals/teachers will reach out to parents about other field trips as the situation evolves.

6. Will school guidance counselors be available via email to discuss the college application process or any other topic? Yes, however, they may not have all the answers to your questions since the entire educational community in PA is working to determine how this closure will affect us.

7. How are we assisting our lower income families during this shutdown? Our community has always been one to rally and help, and many have reached out to ask if we need assistance getting food to our lower income families. At the moment, we are able to provide meals and we do not need volunteers. We will let you know if that changes. Families who are eligible for support with school meals will be notified. If you believe that you should have received the notification but did not by the end of today, please contact Leigh Ann Ranieri, Director of Pupil Services at Iranieri@wcasd.net or 484-266-1229 or 484-266-1050. Families that need additional assistance can contact:

Act in Faith Greater West Chester 484-324-8492

Baptist Church of West Chester 610-696-7466

West Chester Food Cupboard 610-344-3175

West Chester Salvation Army 610-696-8746

Many thanks to our social workers who are doing their best to coordinate carefully with our families.

8. What can the District do to assist families who have children experiencing anxiety? Our counselors are putting the finishing touches on information to share with our families. We fully recognize this situation causes a lot of anxiety and stress. Our mental health specialists will be reaching out to families with whom they are currently working.

You can expect frequent updates from me in the coming weeks. We'll have resources to share, and will certainly let you know if we receive guidance about closure times.

Thank you for your patience and support!

Jim Scanlon, Superintendent