March 21: Stay the Course

Dear HPS Students, Faculty and Community,

First, I want to commend each of you for the flexibility and passion you have shown this past week as we have navigated these unprecedented times. Yesterday, the Michigan Department of Education (MDE) published a Memo that addresses fairly technical aspects of pupil accounting and state funding, including student clock hours and instructional days. Later in the day Governor Whitmer released a statement praising our teachers, students and families and remaining “absolutely committed to ensuring the needs of our students.” I would encourage you as faculty, students and parents, to stay the course by focusing on learning as I believe this will be resolved in the political arena in Lansing in the best interest of our students. The Michigan Legislature is coming back to Lansing on Wednesday, March 25, 2020, for another legislative session so we look forward to more answers then.

To that end, the following is my commitment to you:

- The work you are doing as students, teachers and parents matters and should continue.
- Staff will continue to be compensated during this four week shut down, and we will remain committed to our valued educators.
- Student work will count. We know that we owe all of our students, especially our upperclassmen ‘credit’ for their hard work so that it applies to colleges and their future. This credit will supplement your grades that you had when you left school.
- We will communicate to you as we learn new details.

At this time, please continue to do what you have been doing. Continued learning and deepened focus is important.

Minute by Minute and Day by Day
Everyone wants answers. Some decisions HPS will get to make, other answers are being given to us from the Michigan Department of Education, Governor Whitmer and the Michigan Department of Health.

Many Questions, No Answer Yet
We do not know if schools will remain closed, or for how long. We do know that the Governor has Michigan schools closed until April 6, 2020. We continue to have regular conversations with the ISD and other organizations regarding this matter. As soon as information is shared, we will share it with you. We are thankful that our spring break extends our time through April 12th. This will give our Hazel Park family additional time to recover.

We do know that prom, graduation, spring sports and other school events are on everyone’s mind. We do not have answers yet. We do know that our Governor, the Hazel Park Board of Education, Administration
and Staff all are supporting our students. HPS will do everything we can to make prom and graduation and the other events happen following guidelines from the state.

We know our HPS teachers have given their all to make online and packet learning work. We appreciate the help and support from our parents as we all partner to educate our community’s children. These are uncharted waters. We need to stay flexible and ready. One primary obstacle if we have to extend the school closure is our student’s access to online courses from home. To that end, we need you to respond to this Internet Access Survey for each one of your students and we ask that you ask a friend who does have access to fill it out for you if you do not have access. We really need to know the current situation of all of our students in the event of further closure. While your answers will be held confidentially, we are tracking email addresses for our records.

This is what we know today:

Coronavirus Testing
The Michigan Department of Health has ramped up the Coronavirus testing, so we will continue to see a spike in the number of positive results. Please keep the increase of tests in perspective as we see the number of positive Coronavirus tests being reported. Keep practicing social distancing and hand washing. Today Oakland County announced many changes as well. Please make sure that you are aware of these changes that include the ban of playing on our playgrounds.

State Assessments
We do know the Michigan Department of Education asked the United States Department of Education about assessments. U.S. Secretary of Education Betsy DeVos announced last week that students impacted by school closures due to the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic can bypass standardized testing for the 2019-20 school year. Upon a proper request, the Department will grant a waiver to any state that is unable to assess its students due to the ongoing national emergency, providing relief from federally mandated testing requirements for this school year. HPS would not be taking the State assessments this school year if the federal waiver is approved by the United States Department of Education.

Advanced Placement Testing
The College Board also announced that Advanced Placement tests, scheduled to be administered in May, will be offered to students online for the 2019–20 exam administration due to the COVID-19 outbreak. For more information on free online learning sources and home testing updates, the College Board provides updates here:
The bottom line: Do what is best for students.
We know our parents expect the very best education for their children. Working together we can keep students learning as this situation develops and decisions are made. We ask you to share your thoughts. Reach out to legislators, the governor, our state and board of education – make sure our voices are heard. We need them to support our schools. Our district is doing everything we can to ensure our students continue to be engaged and learn.

Our Board of Education is extremely supportive of your students and recently agreed to extend our free breakfasts and lunch throughout spring break. This is above and beyond what is covered by our federal government. Our Board however, continues to focus on what is best for children. We hope you will join us by taking advantage of this opportunity by picking up meals Monday through Friday 10:30-12:30 at Webb, United Oaks or Hazel Park High School through April 10th.

We also know that now is not the time to panic or throw our hands up in defeat. This is a time when Hazel Park families show who we are and what we value. We value education. We value mental and physical health. We value each other and our community. We will get through this. Hazel Park Schools will continue to do what is right for students. Please be patient with us - and our dedicated Viking teachers - as we determine a path forward.

With Students in Mind,

Dr. Amy Kruppe
Superintendent