

Parents and Students,

Governor Northam declared a State of Emergency and closed schools on March 13<sup>th</sup>. We are now in our second week of Virginia's quarantine that has closed our schools. We know now that schools will be closed for the remainder of this school year. There are still questions about how fast the virus will spread, how long non-essential business will be curtailed, and how long there will be regulations restricting individuals from assembling in groups greater than ten persons in one general area. Though these questions will remain unanswered for a while, we know that we must be proactive in planning long term to care for the needs of our students.

The Virginia Department of Education has issued several publications to give us guidance. The Central Office staff is reviewing these documents, has been communicating with VDOE staff, and is planning our outreach to students and parents. One online resource is particularly helpful for parents and staff:

[http://www.doe.virginia.gov/support/health\\_medical/office/covid-19-parent-guide.shtml](http://www.doe.virginia.gov/support/health_medical/office/covid-19-parent-guide.shtml).

Please review this and share it.

MCPS began an immediate response to this crisis by preparing wholesome breakfast and lunch meals for our students. The four elementary schools were set up as central distribution sites and an increasing number of students have taken advantage of this opportunity each day. We will continue to provide meals for students throughout the school closing except for the week of April 6 – 10 when we had scheduled our spring break.

School will reopen next year and we must be diligent in strategically planning next steps to address instructional deficits that have occurred since March 13. VDOE has offered a few options and our team is evaluating those options to determine what best suits our division. We expect to be relieved of SOL tests for this school year. We are creating new protocols to accurately keep records for current students who are enrolled in such courses.

Thus far we have asked that teachers share lesson packets or online material that would keep students actively engaged in material previously covered and that will build general academic skills. The Office of Civil Rights notified us that we have to attend to guidelines to assure equity of access for all our students when presenting new instructional material. We have received new guidelines about this and will follow them as we provide direction to principals and teachers for delivery of information to students.

A priority for us right now is to work with the Senior class of 2020 to finalize their requirements for graduation. The high school Principals and School Counselors are reviewing each Senior's transcript to document each requirement and develop a plan for any deficits. We are very hopeful to have a graduation ceremony once the ban on large groups is lifted. Appropriate notice will be given for that.

Another topic requiring specific attention is how to handle the Dual Enrollment classes. Southside Virginia Community College has shifted all their spring and summer classes to on-line

delivery. We are working closely with SVCC officials to make the best decisions for our students so that they can earn their credits.

Our Central Office staff has been meeting with VDOE staff and among ourselves to work through the new guidelines and create preliminary plans to move forward. We will meet (virtually) with Principals on Monday, March 30<sup>th</sup> to discuss these plans and gain valuable feedback to guide our decision making. Our goal is to disseminate information back out to teachers shortly thereafter. We will use the week of March 30<sup>th</sup> – April 3<sup>rd</sup> to gather materials and resources to fully execute the plan. Our goal is to provide engaging student activities at home with an equitable program of study beginning on Tuesday, April 14<sup>th</sup>.

The public hearing of the 2020-2021 school budget is scheduled for tomorrow night at 7:00 PM. This will be a virtual meeting delivered live on the MCPS YouTube Channel, <https://www.youtube.com/user/MCPSboard>. Persons with questions or recommendations will be able to ask them via telephone, 434-447-1290. This number will ring and Mrs. Giammatteo, Clerk of the Board, will answer. If someone is already on the line the caller will hear music. They should stay on the line until it starts to ring and Paula answers the next call.

We are developing our response to this crisis as best we can and as quickly as we can. Please self-quarantine your family as much as you can to stay healthy. We will get through this crisis together!

Thank you.