

March 20, 2020

Dear Friends and Families of ER9 Schools:

1. I know many folks are seeking clarification about the April 13-17 scheduled spring break. I do not have an answer for you yet, but I am pursuing this question at the State level. The Boards of Education set the calendars and would have to weigh in on this decision. Please don't lobby them just yet. We are aware of the question and working on an answer for you.

2. If there is a forgotten musical instrument you would like to arrange to pick up, then contact your child's principal. The staff can arrange with you to come get it from the lobby, or they can arrange that as you pull up to the entrance they can leave it outside and you can pick it up. Obviously, this presupposes the Governor doesn't add more restrictions to travel. By the way, I can only guess at what might be in our lockers, but it will have to stay there for now. The custodians have been working through them to ensure no food has been left, but the sneakers and such will have to stay for now.

3. Conversations between teachers and parents or teachers and students: I am asking us all to be mindful of the teacher's time needs when we are in Distance Learning. I know there will be an interest on some calls to catch up and chat for a few minutes. That is normal, but these times aren't. Therefore, on behalf of the teachers, I'm asking we strive to keep the conversations from running over ten to twelve minutes. Please be understanding if a member of our staff or faculty has to get off a call.

4. Next week at the elementary schools and middle schools we have asked the teachers not to assign grades in their gradebooks that will "count". They might be assessing where the students are and therefore you might see something that looks like a test or quiz, but we want to give ourselves a week to get into the swing of things. We will be sure to let everyone know if and when we return to what we teachers call "summative grades" (i.e., that count toward a course grade.)

Related to this is when the quarters or trimesters will end and the final quarter or semester will start. We have not resolved that question yet. We will work on it.

At the high school this coming week there might be graded assessments. Some projects were already underway when we closed down on the 12th, and therefore the high school will determine which can count.

It is too early to talk about assigning grades and/or going to a pass/fail system. We will not lose sight of it.

5. State-mandated testing. The Federal government has waived the requirement for State-mandated testing, in our case the Smarter Balanced Assessment for the elementary and

middle schools and the CT SAT for the juniors at Barlow. I expect a directive from Hartford on this soon.

6. We have now been away from the schools for seven full calendar days. As our medical experts at the Department of Public Health and the Center for Disease Control have indicated, we should all maintain social distance, remain to the degree required by law and Executive Orders the self-quarantining that has been directed, but we should also self-monitor health, wash our hands, and as necessary contact our family physicians for medical guidance.

7. Here's something you might need to quote me directly to some of our teens, "Dr. McMorran has closed the schools, and that includes school grounds, and that includes the Athletic Stadium and playing fields at Barlow. Please remain away from the stadium, the ball fields, and the play areas." Until further notice, the elementary school playgrounds should also be closed.

As we bring our Professional Development to a close today, I want to report that our principals are so very proud of our teachers and the staff who support them. We are all anxious about getting Distance Learning started. Our common phrase should be "flexibility, flexibility, flexibility."

I heard a great saying on the radio a few days ago, "Inch by inch and the problem's a synch; yard by yard and it gets too hard." Let's give all of us some space to figure this out. If it is feeling overwhelming at home as you juggle this new phase of education, remember, inch-by-inch...

We know we will be adjusting and monitoring and adjusting some more as we get this running.

Tom McMorran

Superintendent

Easton, Redding & Region 9 School Districts