

Dear Members of the Portsmouth Schools Community,

As you are aware, we will begin implementing our [Distance Learning Plan](#) on Monday along with all other Rhode Island schools. Please note that this document is an overview of our plan. Each of our principals will be communicating out the more detailed information that will accompany their school-level plans which will be launched at 8:00am on Monday. Thanks to the hard work of our amazing teachers and staff this past week this information would be too much to share in any one document. We also do not want to confuse any students or families as some of the work and expectations will look different by grade and level.

While we know there will be challenges and bumps in the road that need to be worked out, I cannot stress enough that these next 10 digital learning days will count as school days. This will be particularly important if remote learning extends beyond the next few weeks. Students need to understand that school vacation ends as of Monday.

Starting on Monday, we will need to report student "attendance" to the Rhode Island Department of Education as we typically do on an instructional day. We are asking that all students make contact with their homeroom teacher (which may look different at each school and level) between 9:00 and 9:30am each day. You will be receiving further instructions on this from your child's principal. If your child is sick or cannot engage in learning on a particular day please continue to report that absence as you normally would.

Here are some tips and suggestions for students for the next few weeks that I urge all families to review together:

- Get back to following a consistent daily schedule; including an early bedtime and rising at your typical school day time, this is important. Set a daily alarm if that is what you are used to.
- Get dressed each day as if you were going to school. It will be tempting to hang out in pajamas all day. This will not set the tone for a productive day.
- Try to find a personal, quiet space to do your digital learning.
- Ensure you have access to the typical school supplies you use on a regular basis and may need. Let your teachers or principal know if you need help getting these items.
- This is not an extended vacation. Distance Learning days are school days and both students and teachers will be expected to be engaged with instruction. Districts are expected to make sure **everyone** is accountable.
- The purpose of school closures is so we all practice social distancing to help stop the spread of the virus. This is not a time to be having playdates, sleepovers, or other social gatherings. Be smart with the decisions you make.
- Regular sleep, exercise, and eating healthy are important for all of us during these next few weeks!

As I have previously communicated, we are asking that all PSD families complete the following survey (please complete one for each child in our system): [Home Device/Internet Survey](#). Please complete this survey by the end of the day on Thursday, March 19th. This information will help us to be able to better assist all of our students with digital learning capability. We can provide devices or help with internet access for any of our families that need it but these efforts will start with the information we are able to collect through this survey.

Here are some additional resources I have previously shared with you:

[United Way RI](#) (or 2-1-1 on any phone device) is a free and confidential resource for assistance with housing, food, and many other needs with specialists available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

[RIBHDDH](#) or 401-414-LINK (5465) can provide assistance with behavioral or mental health care needs.

Beginning Monday, March 23rd, ***grab and go breakfast and lunches*** will be available for all Portsmouth students in the main foyer of ***Portsmouth Middle School between the hours of 9:00-10:30am***. The location for these services is set by strict state and federal guidelines too numerous to expand upon here. Please know that we have worked very hard, along with our district food service provider, Chartwells, to be able to offer these services to Portsmouth students. Any Portsmouth student can visit PMS during these hours, Monday-Friday, with or without a parent, to receive these free breakfast and lunch items. No questions asked, no paperwork needed.

Every time I send a communication, I receive several inquiries from PSD community members asking how they can help or assist us. It is a great tribute to our wonderful town and district. A fully functional ***Emergency Operations Center is set up at Portsmouth Town Hall***. Part of that includes a volunteer coordinator to ensure that efforts get to those most in need while at the same time ensuring the safety of all. If you are interested in volunteering your time or services during this crisis please contact the Portsmouth EOC Volunteer Coordinator, Debra Correia at dcorreiaPMEA@gmail.com. For more information on the Portsmouth EOC click [here](#).

Finally, I have also heard from some of you about families you are aware of that do not receive our messages, either by phone or email. If a member of the PSD community is not receiving these messages it is because, despite best efforts, we do not have the correct contact information in our system. Needless to say, times like these make it critically important that we are able to get information out to all who need it. Please encourage those individuals to start with a phone call to the main office of their child's school. Although access to our buildings is limited at this time there is staff available by phone or email to assist.

My best to all of you and your families during these uncertain times. Be on the lookout for further communication from your child's principal and teachers as we get ready to begin distance learning in Portsmouth at 8:00am on Monday.

Tom Kenworthy
Superintendent
kenworthy@portsmouthschoolsri.org