

March 31, 2020

Dear Members of the Portsmouth Schools Community,

As you may have heard, yesterday Governor Raimondo extended our current school closure and distance learning period through at least the end of April. Unlike some other states, Rhode Island is not suspending the school year through any phase of school closure or distance learning and has no intention of doing so even if this has to continue beyond April. All districts have been urged to continue to work together with all stakeholders (students, staff, and families) to make distance learning as meaningful as possible for all students with the understanding that these are instructional days in our school calendar. Here is an overview of the distance learning phases since the school closure decision was made on March 13, 2020:

March 16-20 - Spring break was moved to this week for all RI districts with the expectation that this would be a planning week for distance learning

March 23-April 3 - Initial distance learning phase for all RI districts

April 6-30 - Distance learning will continue for all RI districts

**Here are some additional announcements to share today:**

All RI districts are being asked to adopt the same ***school calendar*** for the duration of distance learning. We will formally do this in Portsmouth at an upcoming School Committee meeting. For now, please be aware of the following dates:

*April 3 and 17 - Teacher planning days; no distance learning expectations for students*

*April 9 and 10 - Good Friday/Easter Recess; no distance learning expectations for students or teachers*

The Rhode Island Department of Education has applied for a federal exemption ***waiver for all remaining state assessments*** this year. As part of that waiver application, all RI educational stakeholders are invited to complete a [Public Comment Survey](#) by April 10, 2020.

Verizon, AT&T, T-Mobile, and Sprint have all agreed to enable the ***hotspot feature on all smartphones*** at no cost. This is being done to facilitate internet connectivity for those who do not have it. If you have internet service, you are asked to not enable this feature on your smartphone as there is concern about the capacity of these systems. This is in addition to previous [information](#) we have shared from ***Cox Communications***. If you need assistance with either of these offers please contact your child's principal. We can help!

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

Until further notice, all of our ***buildings are closed to the public***. This has extended to our school playground areas as well, per Town order. If there is an emergency situation that you did not anticipate please contact the school principal. Staff is available to answer phone or email messages remotely.

We will be **extending the end of the 3rd quarter marking period (two weeks) to April 21st**. This will allow ample time for students and teachers to finalize work/grading for anything that had been assigned prior to March 13th (the date of the initial closure announcement).

[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.

***Grab and go breakfast and lunches*** are available for all Portsmouth students at ***Portsmouth Middle School, Monday through Friday, 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, with or without a parent, to receive these free breakfast and lunch items. No questions asked, no paperwork needed.

A fully functional ***Emergency Operations Center is set up at Portsmouth Town Hall***. This EOC is operational seven days a week. For more information on the Portsmouth EOC, including how to volunteer your time or resources, click [here](#).

My continued best wishes to all of you and your families during the coming weeks!

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