

April 5, 2020

Dear Members of the Portsmouth Schools Community,

I hope our students and families were able to benefit from the pause in distance learning on Friday. Our teachers and instructional staff were hard at work to ensure we are ready for our next phase which will take us through the end of April. You should have and will continue to receive more information from each school as we look to build off of the systems put in place and lessons learned in our initial distance learning phase. We will be seeking to implement more opportunities for teaching and learning time in this next phase while balancing the need for flexibility and limiting screen time as much as possible. Be sure to reach out to teachers and principals with any questions as we make our way through this next phase.

**Here are some additional announcements I have to share with you today:**

We realize that distance learning has brought with it an increase in the amount of video conferencing between students, teachers, and even entire classes. We encourage all families to review this list ***online learning etiquette tips*** developed by our PSD Technology Integration Coaches, Mr. Tim Marum (PHS, Hathaway, Melville) and Ms. Sarah DeSanto (PMS). Also, please note that some teachers may opt to record online lessons to share with students at a later date. If parents/guardians have a concern about video recording, please ensure that the camera function is disabled on the device that your child is using.

The Portsmouth ***School Committee*** will meet virtually on Tuesday evening. The [agenda](#) includes an update to our school calendar to reflect the RIDE suggested dates for distance learning through April 30th and the extension of our 3rd quarter marking period (to April 21st).

Our ***grab and go breakfast and lunch*** program at Portsmouth Middle School has been averaging about 75 meals per day. We are happy to be able to provide this service and are able to accommodate additional meals if needed. To promote social distancing, new regulations allow just one person in a family to show up to get needed meals for students. ***Children no longer need to attend and families are encouraged to send an adult only.*** These free breakfast and lunch items are available for pick up at PMS, Monday through Friday, between the hours of 9:00-10:30am. No questions asked, no paperwork needed.

There is a ***statewide reading challenge*** for the month of April. All PSD schools will incorporate reading time into their revised distance learning plans. Visit the Rhode Island Department of Education's [April Reading Challenge](#) page for more information. Students can log onto the [RIDE Reading Log](#) to submit the minutes and books they read each day.

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

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, TMobile, 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!

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. All activities previously scheduled through April 30<sup>th</sup> are cancelled. Staff is available to answer phone or email messages remotely.

[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.

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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