

April 19, 2020

Dear Members of the Portsmouth Schools Community,

I hope all in our community continue to be safe and well. This week we are expected to hear an announcement from Governor Raimondo related to school closures and distance learning beyond April 30th. We will be sure to pass along any updated information.

Here are some new announcements for you today:

Distance Learning has transformed education nationally, statewide, and right here in Portsmouth. Now more than ever, we know that educating our students requires a huge partnership and collaboration with parents and guardians. The PSD recognizes that for parents and guardians, supporting children in the role of teacher and meeting other demands can elicit mixed feelings. With this in mind, our district has partnered with **Newport County Mental Health** to offer a [Virtual Parent Support Group](#). The first meeting will be on **Thursday April 23 @5:00-6:00**. The group is designed for parents/guardians of school age children. Please consider participating in this group if it is helpful to you.

The Portsmouth School District, in collaboration with our food service provider, Chartwells, provides **free grab and go breakfast and lunch** to anyone age 18 or under, no questions asked. The number of meals we are handing out has been increasing each week and we are able to accommodate changes in demand. The program currently operates Monday through Friday from 9:00-10:30 AM at Portsmouth Middle School but beginning the **Week of April 27th the location will be changing to Portsmouth High School**. Click [here](#) for more details. To better accommodate social distancing, service has transitioned and will continue to operate as drive through pick up. Children no longer need to be present for meal pick up.

In an effort to ensure residents are safe and secure, and to provide them information and access to essential services, the Town of Portsmouth is sending every household a **COVID-19 Wellness Survey** that, if completed and returned, will help the Town identify those in need. More information can be found by clicking [here](#).

Here are announcements and resources I have previously shared with you that are still relevant:

We recently updated our 2019-20 [school calendar](#) to reflect all changes to date with school closures and distance learning. If distance learning extends beyond April 30th we will make additional adjustments.

Our PSD librarians have put together a great program to support the statewide reading challenge for the month of April. We encourage all students and families to find some time each day to read. Click [here](#) for more information on our Portsmouth program. Join us in using the hashtag #PortsmouthRIReads to share your favorite book or what you are currently reading.

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.

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 30th 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!

Tom Kenworthy
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