

April 26, 2020

Dear Members of the Portsmouth Schools Community,

As you have probably heard by now, on Thursday Governor Raimondo announced that schools will remain closed and distance learning will continue for the remainder of the school year. Our staff is committed to continuing to work with families to make distance learning a meaningful but manageable experience for all. Please do not hesitate to reach out to your child's teachers or principal with any questions or concerns. I will be bringing a revised school calendar forward at the next School Committee meeting (May 5th). See below for more details. Extended closures will mean that most end of year activities will need to take place in an alternative format. Schools will be communicating their plans for these activities in the coming weeks. Unfortunately, this also includes graduation ceremonies for the Class of 2020. The administration of PHS is leading a group that is looking into ways to celebrate our seniors in the best way possible. Updates on these plans will also be shared at the next School Committee meeting.

Here are some new announcements for you today:

- 1) With the extension of distance learning, all districts are once again being asked to follow the same ***school calendar***. These updates will be made to our 2019-20 calendar:

May 6 - Teacher Planning Day (No Distance Learning for Students)

May 15 - No Distance Learning for Teachers or Students (This day will count towards our 180)

May 20 - Teacher Planning Day (No Distance Learning for Students)

May 25 - Memorial Day (No Distance Learning for Teachers or Students)

June 1 - Teacher Planning Day (No Distance Learning for Students)

June 18 - Our 180th Day

- 2) Our ***grab and go breakfast and lunch*** distribution is changing to ***Portsmouth High School*** as of Monday, April 27th. Click [here](#) for more details. This service is available Monday through Friday from 9:00-10:30 am. Meals handed out on Fridays include extra items for the weekend. The number of meals we are handing out has increased each week and we can accommodate more demand. These meals are free for any child in a household under the age of 18, no questions asked. Distribution is through drive up service. Children do not have to be present.
- 3) The PSD IT now has a ***virtual helpdesk for families***. The helpdesk [form](#) can be found on the IT [website](#) which is updated regularly and includes tech information and helpful tips.
- 4) We received some great news this week that ***PHS was #4 in RI*** in the latest [US News and World Report](#) rankings. That ranking was also #719 out of 24,000 high schools in the US which puts PHS in the top 3%. Wow! Congratulations to all PHS students and staff.
- 5) ***Nominations*** are being accepted for our 2020 PSD [Teacher of the Year](#) and [Support Professional of the Year](#). Nominations are open to parents and students through May 15, 2020.

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

- 6) 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.
- 7) 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](#).
- 8) 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.
- 9) 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 DelSanto (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.
- 10) 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!
- 11) [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.
- 12) 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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