

April 24, 2020 – Family Update

Dear MCS Families,

As I have done each Friday during the closure, I am providing you with updates regarding the conversations and strategic planning that are occurring among school and district leaders. As you may sense from my thoughts below, we are intentionally shifting our priorities from short-term needs to more long-range innovation and preparedness. All of it – the here and now and the unknown future – are focused on best supporting you, our students, and our staff.

Bringing Closure to the School Year

As we approach the close of the “normal” school year next month, our principals and I are working through various issues and opportunities. We will continue to thoughtfully consider how we can bring appropriate closure to this very unusual school year. From student awards to a simple goodbye with a beloved staff member, each of these moments matters to your child and, subsequently, matters to us.

If your child still has personal belongings in their classroom, please know these are secure. When it is safe to do so (perhaps later this summer), we will communicate how and when you may retrieve any personal items. Additionally, in the coming weeks your student’s principal will provide information about our plans for end-of-year events such as student awards and various school traditions for certain grade levels (again, when it is safe to do such).

Summer Learning Program (Grades K-8)

I want to thank the hundreds of elementary and middle school families who have already signed up for our free summer learning program. This opportunity was developed based on research (sprinkled with common sense): the interruption to the school year has put all our students – regardless of age, gender, race, or socioeconomic status – at an academic disadvantage. Specifically, NWEA (Northwest Evaluation Association), the research-based organization that developed the MAP test used in MCS and across the country, has predicted a potential national trend of students entering the next grade level in the fall with only 70% of the knowledge of their previous peers in reading and, similarly, only 50% in math. In MCS, we are simply unwilling to accept that this decrease in learning is inevitable.

Make no mistake about it, I know we can and will beat the “national norm” in our community. I am grateful for the Herculean efforts of our MCS educators – they have worked tirelessly over the last six weeks to teach, love, engage, and encourage our students. From meal delivery to Chromebooks to hotspots to school buses, every effort has been made to give our students and families the best resources so our children do not become a statistic. I’m proud of what our students and staff have done thus far: 93% of our students have engaged with their teacher on Schoology. However, this pandemic marathon is far from over.

To that end, I ask each elementary and middle grades MCS family to consider participating in our free summer learning program. If you have not done so already, please complete the registration form for [elementary grades](#) or [middle grades](#) by May 6 (6:00 p.m.). MHS students will have the opportunity for virtual summer school credit recovery – please refer to communication from Principal Keith Ball for more details.

Fall 2020

There is an obvious question on everyone's mind: will we open our schools for students in August? The honest answer: I just don't know. What I do know is that we will continue to rely on guidance from the experts about the safest approach for our students and staff. In the meantime, we are taking proactive measures to be prepared for the day that we are given permission to resume "normal" school. Such considerations include but are not limited to medical safety protocols, increased cleaning and disinfecting procedures, and the potential for additional school closures in the future. If we are unable to open school as scheduled on August 4 or if we have continued school closures next school year, I may be forced to consider Fall Break (September 28-October 2) or Mid-winter Break (February 16-19) as options to recover lost instructional days. It is too early to know for certain, but I feel it is worth acknowledging this possibility.

As we navigate this uncertain future together, I want you to have peace of mind that we will work with each family to find the right solution for your student. We will make decisions that support 12 schools and 8,753 students; we will also acknowledge that each child and family may have unique needs as we consider walking back into a school building.

In closing, thank you. I will be forever grateful that we are partners on this journey together.

For the children,
Grant

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