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Dear Parents and Students:

On Friday, the Governor officially ordered that schools remain closed for the remainder of the school year. While many predicted this likely direction, the final declaration was certainly heartbreaking. Given the extraordinary times we share, this message will be the first of multiple communications this week. We are all better when we work together and sharing important information will help keep us connected as we forge ahead – together.

Please know that you can rely on the supportive presence and attentiveness from our teachers, faculty, administrators and staff members during our physical distance. With each passing week, we can sense the increasing challenge facing all of us due to our separation from friends, family members and support people, and we are particularly mindful of those whose health or living circumstances have been dramatically changed by the current virus.

Amid these circumstances, we all draw strength from the uplifting spirit, optimism and fortitude among our students, often brought about by their connection with our teachers and student services personnel. Whether from students, staff members or parents, we are grateful for the inspiring and touching messages of appreciation that have been shared, including the many creative expressions of support on social media.

### **Calendar of Upcoming School Days**

Upon the Governor's order closing schools, our teachers and faculty members responded immediately by altering their materials and planned means of instruction. Since March 30, our staff members have responded to this unprecedented challenge by reshaping their materials and instruction to take place entirely online.

Knowing the challenges associated with a complete and immediate changeover to online learning, the Illinois State Board of Education authorized five days of professional development to help each district support its faculty. In District 211, hopeful that our remote learning might extend only through April, we drew upon the existing skills and experience of our teachers in our one-to-one environment, and we scheduled a reliable daily presence of our teachers to be available for our students throughout each day in April.

Knowing that remote learning will continue for the remainder of the school year, and to optimize what we can accomplish in the remaining weeks, our students and our faculty will benefit from some time dedicated to support our teachers and student services personnel. We will utilize the available professional development days to help our faculty draw upon their experiences up to this point, share their most effective methods with each other and connect with students who may need additional support.

The five days listed below will be used for professional development to support our faculty. Students will not register their school attendance in Infinite Campus on these days and may use the time to complete coursework that has already been assigned.

Designated Professional Development Days to Support Remote Learning:

- Monday, April 27
- Monday, May 4
- Monday, May 11
- Monday May 18
- Friday, May 22

Our seniors' last day of attendance will be Wednesday, May 13. In support of our many students who will take Advanced Placement (AP) examinations, any student registered to take an AP test will be able to keep his or her iPad for the purpose of completing the online AP exam. Even if a course has ended, as in years past, we will provide tutoring and support hours from a number of faculty members to help students prepare for an AP test.

The last day of remote learning for freshmen, sophomores or juniors will be Thursday, May 21. Only our faculty members will have session on May 22 in order to receive and grade coursework arriving late in the semester and to ensure accurate calculation of each student's grades according to the special parameters we described in [last week's message](#).

## **Graduations**

Special thanks go to all those who took the time to complete the survey and to express their interests surrounding graduation ceremonies and prom events. We frequently receive messages from parents and students about this topic, and because this is such an important priority, I will send a special communication to our seniors and their parents and guardians tomorrow, Tuesday, April 21, providing a more extensive description of the latest developments specific to our many attempts to honor our graduates and their families. We will continue to pursue any available information and all possibilities, abiding by constraints imposed upon us by the current public health crisis. I thank you for your patience in awaiting the additional communication as we continue to gather and exchange information.

## **Helpful Online Payment System**

One of our upcoming improvements will include a means for parents to make payments for any school fees easily and online. Many parents are familiar with the *MySchoolBucks* app to pay for school meals. Beginning this week, we will expand the functionality of this platform beyond the current prepay meal services to enable online payments for other monetary obligations, such as registration fees, iPad repair costs, parking passes and more. Parents who have helped test the system have been pleased with the ease and ability to pay student fees from anywhere using their computer or mobile device. Because this system will be embedded in so many parent transactions in the future, we will issue a separate communication dedicated to this topic on Wednesday, April 22.

## **Supports Available**

Please know that our social workers, psychologists and guidance counselors are available to speak with you or your son or daughter. Amid the unique challenges of these times, it is important that we remain vigilant about the social-emotional health and well-being of our students. If you have any concerns about your son or daughter, our staff members are ready and available to assist.

As we look to reduce the spread of this virus and its impact, we encourage everyone to follow the good health and hygiene practices and the social distancing guidelines outlined by numerous public health organizations.

Until you receive our upcoming communications, I extend my best regards to you and all yours,

Daniel E. Cates  
Superintendent

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