

Kittery

School District

Truth & Knowledge

*Horace Mitchell Primary School
Shapleigh School
R.W. Traip Academy*

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March 18, 2020

Good Wednesday afternoon...

This beautiful day must not go to waste! Be sure to go outside, take a walk, and focus on all that is good in the world right now.

I wanted to check-in with you and let you know how things are progressing on the school-end of things. Our remote school nutrition program launched successfully this morning and again at lunch. Beginning tomorrow, Thursday, March 19th, you can pick up lunch (and breakfast for the following day) at one of three remote sites from 11:00 AM to noon, Monday through Friday, until we return to on-site school. Yesterday, I called you about this program and emailed you the link to register. You need only register once. We will assume you are planning to pick up meals each weekday at the site you selected. Didn't get the email? No worries! Just send an email to Wendy Collins, our School Nutrition Director: wcollins@kitteryschools.com

Now, speaking of '*until we return to on-site school*,' I want to be perfectly honest with you. I cannot tell you when that will be. Massachusetts schools and many New Hampshire schools are shut down through April 3rd. You are soon going to hear that some York County schools are shut down until April 27th. The likelihood our the Kittery School District resuming on-site learning in our three schools after this two-week shutdown is low. Again, I am seeking more definitive direction from the Governor and Commissioner of Education. In the meantime, you should plan for additional childcare (beyond March 27th). I know firsthand how difficult that is. Hang in there.

For now, our remote learning deployment will officially begin on March 23rd. You will receive information about this from your student's teacher by Friday afternoon. You will also receive communication from your Principal about technology and access to the Internet. Be watching for that! I have tremendous faith in our professional and support staff that they will create a remote learning experience for your student that is engaging and valuable. We can do it!

You, the parents, have an important role in all this as well. My kids began their remote learning today; it was our job as parents to make sure they had what they needed, to have read through all the email communication from their teachers and schools (we have four kids...you do the math! That was A LOT of email), and to establish an environment at home that is conducive to learning ("*Oh, here Rowan. Let me take that cell phone and tuck it away **OUT OF REACH** until your school day is done!*").

But that's not all. You need to make other tough (and unpopular) decisions as well during this shutdown. The whole idea of shutting down our schools is to enhance social distancing (I know you've heard about that ad nauseam lately). As a result, the following should not be occurring until further notice:

- **Play dates**
- **Parties**
- **Sleepovers**
- **Families visiting other families' homes/apartments**
- **Hosting dinners and inviting other families**

• **Playing in public playgrounds (including the ones at Shapleigh School and Mitchell Primary School)**

My 16-year-old could not believe we wouldn't let her hang out with friends Sunday night. Do you know how impossible a 16-year-old can be when she doesn't get her way? It was ugly, but we stood firm, and I think her friends' parents appreciated it; I know they will use it to feel empowered to do the same next time. We are all doing our best. Be strong! Be firm! This pandemic will pass, and your teen's social life will be even stronger (just not right now). In the meantime, Jen and I look for the silver lining. We have had dinner together as a family every night this week. We have taken walks as a family. We have watched a movie together--all six of us!

Finally (this is a recording!), if your student is sick with a cough, fever, or shortness of breath, we would really appreciate it if you would reach out to your School Nurse after you have called your primary care provider (Call! Don't go!). Thank you for all you are doing to slow the spread of Covid-19. My 80-year-old mother thanks you too!

Sincerely, 

Eric F. Waddell
Superintendent of Schools