

Ontario-Montclair

School District

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Superintendent

April 28, 2020

Hello OMSD students, families, staff and community members:

Over the past few weeks, our nation has responded to a public health crisis not seen before in our lifetime. The threat of COVID-19 prompted the unprecedented decision to keep students home from school in an effort to practice social distancing and to ease the impact to our healthcare system. This has caused educators across the country to build Distance Learning models that can provide high quality learning experiences, while ensuring equity and access for all students.

During this time, there are many people to thank and acknowledge. I would like to start with our parents and families who in many cases are now guiding their children through daily distance learning and childcare, while managing their regular jobs. This nearly impossible task requires more physical and mental capacity than most of us have.

Meanwhile, our teachers are working under similar strained conditions with many of them taking care of their own children and family members, while maintaining emotional connectedness and academic continuity for our students. A great number of our teachers are using teleconferencing tools and other technology, which were unfamiliar to them just a few weeks ago. This goes to show that many of our teachers are modeling the traits we hope to instill in our students including determination, adaptability and resiliency in the face of adversity.

I am proud of the new Distance Learning program being implemented with our students. Many of our teachers have quickly made the adjustments necessary to work online with students who have computer and WI-FI access. Additionally, OMSD is also providing instruction offline either through the District's adopted curriculum or from over 20,000 curriculum packets that were recently printed and distributed to students.

Teachers are consistently in contact with students and parents to provide feedback on learning, as well as provide social and emotional support. Students who were receiving counseling services from our Family and Collaborative staff continue to receive support via phone or videoconference.

The OMSD Special Education staff and Service Providers are focused on compliance and adherence to the services for students with Individualized Education Program (IEPs). This includes finding the creative means to provide Specialized Academic Instruction, Occupational Therapy, Physical Therapy, Speech and Language services, Adaptive Physical Education, services for Deaf and Hard of Hearing and Visually Impaired students, as well as other related services.

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Others who deserve praise for their critical roles during these challenging times are our classified support staff members, many of who are working on the front lines, such as our Food and Nutrition Services team, who to date have served over 260,000 meals since mid-March. Other classified support team members who keep our essential campus and district office operations going includes our grounds crew, safety officers, custodians, proctors, clerical professionals and instructional aides at school sites, information services technicians, maintenance and operations staff, transportation personnel, print shop staff, the warehouse team and so many other classified support staff throughout the Ontario-Montclair School District.

Since our temporary shutdown began on March 16, over 5,000 laptops have been distributed to students and staff. For staff, students and families in need of technology assistance, the OMSD help desk whose contact information is on the OMSD website, remains available.

I want to recognize our OMSD administrators who are providing tremendous leadership while supporting Distance Learning and ensuring that all operational work of the school district is led effectively and efficiently. Our classified and certificated leaders in OMSD continually focus on student welfare, supporting staff and partnering with families and community. Their exemplary leadership has allowed for a continuance of services and programs, while still maintaining the fiscal solvency of our school system.

Be assured that while our campuses may be closed, the school year is not finished. I know OMSD students and staff will finish the academic school year with great effort and integrity. Instruction for our students will remain by utilizing OMSD's outstanding Distant Learning platform until the last day of this academic school year, which ends on May 21, 2020.

There will be an opportunity in mid-May, for staff and students to briefly come back to school campuses to return school materials and retrieve personal belongings. While still adhering to state and county guidelines on social distancing, in the days ahead, site principals will be sharing additional information about a staggered schedule of predetermined times for identified staff, students and families. A specific plan will be prepared for each school site. This will allow for physical distancing on our school campuses while providing opportunities for students and staff to return laptops and other school owned properties, in conjunction with opportunities to pick up personal items, academic records, certificates and awards of recognition and other materials of importance that should be taken home.

The end of the school year also creates a lot of staff movement in OMSD. Vacancies primarily happen through promotions, relocation, resignations and retirements. The Human Resources team in OMSD continues to recruit, interview and hire certificated, classified, management, and substitute positions in preparation for the 2020-2021 school year.

District staff is looking forward and has begun planning for our next school year, which begins August 6, 2020. On-line enrollment of students for the 2020-2021 school year will be available on the OMSD website, as well as the traditional process of enrolling through a paper packet. Families that require any assistance on enrollment, transfers and record requests can contact the OMSD Child, Welfare & Attendance department.

In the weeks ahead, we anticipate receiving additional guidance from the state and county departments of public health, the California Department of Education and the Governor's office on how best to systematically open schools and what that format may look like.

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As we learn more about the trends related to COVID-19, provide time for other agencies to conduct more wide-scale virus testing and allow additional time for medical interventions to be properly established; OMSD will open campuses next school year with a thoughtful plan that prioritizes the safety of our students, staff and local community. The opening of our schools will be determined on several factors based on scientific information. Once OMSD creates a specific plan to open school next August, we will be sure to communicate this plan to all of our stakeholders in a timely fashion.

Undoubtedly, these are challenging and difficult times for so many OMSD students, their families and our staff. History has shown us that even the worse pandemics eventually end, and this will be the case with COVID-19. This end may take several months, maybe even a year or two, but it will end. I am confident that the OMSD community will find its way through these challenging and difficult times by embracing faith, science, basic human kindness and practical common sense. As we weather this storm, let us not forget who we are as a people and who we aspire to become. The values we share in OMSD such as compassion and genuine care for others, will continue to endure, including the love and empathy we have for all of our students and our most vulnerable populations.

Finally, to all of our amazing and wonderful OMSD students, remember that there are so many of us in OMSD who care for your well-being. Your academic achievement and growth as an individual drives the purpose behind our work as teachers, classified support staff, principals and district office staff and administrators. In the midst of this historic time, as we continue Distance Learning, modify how school looks for you next year, or return to some level of accustomed normalcy, your welfare will always be first and foremost with all of us in OMSD. More importantly, in believing that there is a great future for all you, know that you are loved and missed. All of us here in OMSD believe you have it in you to continue to learn, achieve and develop during the next several months, and during this process, we will be with you every step of the way.

On behalf of the OMSD Board of Trustees, I thank you for all that you do to support teaching and learning in our community, especially while our students cannot be together in their classrooms.

Respectfully,
James Q. Hammond, Ed.D.
Superintendent