March 20, 2020

Dear Students, Staff and Families of New London Public Schools,

I hope that you and your family are doing well and are following the recommendations of local and state leaders and health officials. We are working hard and working smart, following social distancing protocols too. Our staff continue to be engaged in a lot of work production behind the scenes and will continue to work remotely and (for some) on site through limited building and central office assignments.

This unprecedented national situation is one that we will get through as we continue to support each other and stand united to serve our students, families and school community. Our words, our actions and our undivided commitment to doing what is best for our children is how we will meet success. I/we miss our students deeply. They continue to be in our thoughts every single day. Each family will continue to be contacted by NLPS staff regularly by phone to check in, make connections and offer support. We care about you! I am very proud of the incredible work we have already accomplished together, and I know we will only continue to do more and more. Thank you, all, for living up to our district’s vision to truly be United in Excellence.

Tonight, I wish to update our school community on several key initiatives:

School Calendar:
- All should be aware that New London Public Schools are closed from March 16th-31st per State Legislation.
- In addition, we will now remain closed for another two weeks from April 1 – April 17th.
- Please note that our district is closed for April vacation (as originally scheduled) from April 10th to April 17th.
- We will be continuing to re-evaluate the national and state-wide health situation every two weeks and will keep families updated through the Superintendent’s communication each Friday.
- Our last day of school for this school year will be June 22nd.

Academics:
- It is our hope that all students, K-12, are working on their Student Learning Packets. These have been distributed to students and families in person last Monday and continue to be distributed during the food distribution times at our four school sites. I am pleased to announce that you can now find electronic copies of all these academic resources on our district website. Please click here to access them (Click Here).
• Students should continue to work on their Student Learning Packets from March 16th through March 30th.

• Distance Learning Academic Programming: Moving forward, the district is going to be implementing a Distance Learning Programming. This is defined as a combination of academic lessons, which will be delivered online and through traditional paper, pencil and hands-on learning activities. The critical step in setting up our Distance Learning Program is to collect accurate data on students’ at-home access to technology and Wi-Fi. Below is a district survey whereby we are collecting this data from each family. Click Here.

• A School Messenger call will be sent on Monday in hopes to engage any family who does not currently have access to any technology. We will be asking those families to call a hotline number so that we can gather their family’s information and be ready to accommodate their student/s. Please disregard this message if you can complete our online survey on behalf of your students.

• We will be distributing one-to-one technology devices to each student, K-12. Students in grades K-2 will receive an iPad; students in grades 3-5 will receive a Chromebook and students in grades 6-12 will also receive a Chromebook. A schedule of distribution will be shared with families on Tuesday next week. All students should have a district-issued technology device in hand by the end of the day next Friday, March 27th.

• Every student will be using their district-issued email address. Most secondary students, grades 6-12, are familiar with such. Elementary students will need assistance setting up their accounts, and directions will be shared with students and families in my communication next Friday, March 27th. These email accounts will allow students to connect virtually with their teacher, as assigned.

• Teachers will be participating in professional development, online classroom set up and lesson planning throughout next week.

• Families will receive specific directions on how their child will engage in Distance Learning Activities in my communication to families on Friday, March 27th. The NLPS Distance Learning Programming is scheduled to begin on Monday March 30th. We will continue programming for two-week increments.

• Special Education, English Language and 504 students and their families will be receiving more specific information regarding academic programming for their student, by the end of next week. This customized communication and programming will continue to be on-going between teachers and families regularly.

• Effective immediately, all teachers and all administrators (central office and school based) are working daily. Each can be reached through their district email and will be responding to your inquiries during daytime hours.

• Additional Instructional Resources: For those families and students who are looking for additional learning activities to do over the next few weeks, I am pleased to share that we have vetted and prepared new resources pages on our district website to highlight
such for each grade and content level. To access these engaging, high-quality, and recommended websites and resource links for extended learning opportunities please click the Distance Learning Tab on the top of the District’s website homepage. From here, please select your grade level. We will continue to add to these resources over the next few weeks. We hope you enjoy these too!

- I am SUPER excited to announce that we will be doing recorded videos of multiple staff and community members reading books to students! These “story times” will be recorded and shared regularly. Our first debut will be on Monday, March 23rd at 4:00 p.m. Please tune in by following the directions on our website.

**Food Services:**
- Beginning Tuesday, March 24th, the New London Public Schools’ Child Nutrition Program will begin distributing meals on **Tuesdays and Fridays ONLY** via school busses and vans, to 36 designated stops throughout the city.
- Please reference NLPS’ Social Media for a graphic containing bus stops and times. This information will be shared over the weekend.
- Tuesday’s meal distribution will be for 3 days’ worth of food, and Friday’s distribution will be for 4 days’ worth of food.
- Reheating and cold holding instructions will be provided in each meal pack. If you do not have the means to reheat or store frozen meals, please contact Samantha Wilson; wilsons@newlondon.org to make other arrangements for meals.
- Households should visit our social media pages daily, as locations and times for meal service are subject to change as our program continues to adapt to demand and changing logistics.

**School-Based Health Center:**
- The School Based Health Center at Winthrop School has closed its regular hours and is now only available by pre-made appointment. The phone number for families to call to make an appointment is: 860-437-4555.

**COVID-Resources and Community Resources:**
- COVID-19: Attached is a new resource for families sharing strategies for addressing fear and anxiety in children during this time.
- CENSUS: Census information has been mailed to every household. We need all families to register their information so that every member of our community can be “counted”, which would allow the City of New London to continue receiving a variety of resources to serve its community. Please see the attached flyer for more information.
- 211: Please visit the 211 website for additional services that 211 is providing during the COVID-19 Pandemic: [http://www.211.org/services/covid19](http://www.211.org/services/covid19)
Please continue to view our district website, COVID section, for additional resources that aim to educate, inform and support families and students.

Communication:

- I thank you for taking time to read my very lengthy communications. There is much to share, and I am trying to be as articulate as I can to explain multiple details. Moving forward we are going to add another layer of communication and this is visual/virtual communication. Starting next week, you can expect my communication to be written, oral and visual. We are going to begin to video record updates for our school community. Consider such New London Public School’s version of the “news”. I am hopeful that this method of communicating will be effective, and that students and families alike will enjoy seeing multiple staff member’s faces as we highlight each departments’ collaborative initiatives. New London’s “news casts” will be streamed out to our school community at 4:00 p.m. on Tuesday, March 31st and at 4:00 p.m. on Friday, April 3rd. A regular schedule will then be posted for ongoing communication.

- Questions and Answers: We are continuing to field and respond to the questions that are coming into our survey, which is posted on our district website. Please continue to view our written responses to such questions and continue to write in with any others on your mind. As we begin to video record and share district updates, we will also interweave some of these questions into our productions.

- School Messenger: [Click Here For Directions] for families and students to sign up for School Messenger. We use this to communicate school and district-based communications via phone call and text message. Please be sure you have registered yourself and that you have signed up to receive BOTH school and district messages.

- In addition, the district communicated through 3 main avenues:
  1. Our district website [www.newlondon.org]
  2. Facebook @ New London Public Schools
  3. Twitter @ New London Whalers

Please follow us if you wish to stay connected through our Social Media platforms.

On behalf of myself, the Board of Education and our entire faculty, I thank you very much for your partnership.

With Whaler Pride,

Cynthia Ritchie

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