March 19, 2020

Good Evening Seymour Families,

We miss our students already and hope that we get to see them back in school in the near the future. It was so nice and refreshing for us to see all of your smiling faces yesterday and today while picking up your technology and lunch. Your kind words of support and thanks were truly appreciated by me, my Associate Superintendent, Food Service Staff and our IT Team. Even though our schools may be physically closed, please know that your team is very busy developing plans for distance learning and to support our families and students! Individual schools and teachers may be sharing different platforms as well as creative and fun avenues of instructional communication with you. We want to reassure you that our primary communication path with you will be consistently through our Blackboard Connect email blasts, Facebook, and website postings.

As of 6:00 this evening, 575 Chromebooks have been distributed to our wonderful Seymour students. We have one more date designated for pick-up, on Saturday from 10:00am to 1:00pm. If you were unable to obtain a device for each learner in your home, please return on Saturday to pick up the remainder of the devices your family’s need.

We are impressed and proud of how well our community has pulled together to support our efforts to implement ongoing instruction. We are learning an incredible amount during these new experiences, and will continue to learn in partnership with you, each and every day. As evidenced by the last few days, we will get through this as a team!

School Closures
● As of today, the Governor’s order that all public schools will remain closed through Tuesday, March 31 is still in effect. Our schools’ date of re-open will be dependent on the recommendations of our state and local health officials.
● Yesterday, we received word from the CIAC that it still may consider a modified Spring Sports schedule if health conditions allow. More information on this will be shared from our Athletic Director as it becomes available.
● We are unable to provide families access to the buildings during the closure to minimize the possibility of re-introducing germs into the building. All buildings continue to be thoroughly cleaned and disinfected by our custodial staff during this closure. A big THANK YOU to those members of our team as they have worked tirelessly to keep our buildings safe.
Distance Learning

● At each building teachers are working to create additional materials and lessons to support student learning during this extended closure. Teachers are using the familiar online platform: Google Classroom for grades 2-12 to post lessons and communicate with students and families beginning Monday, March 23. Students in grades K and 1 will use a Google Doc link provided by classroom teachers (via e-mail) as K and 1 students are not familiar with Google Classroom. Please have your children ready to go on Monday. Times frames for distance learning will come from your building Administrators, but remember your teachers will be available from 8:00am – 2:00pm to support our students and parents.

● Teachers will be able to push out and collect student assignments through these platforms. Teachers may also use online platforms, such as Google Hangouts/Meet, Google Chat, and Zoom, to hold virtual class meetings and provide opportunities for student interaction if they so choose. We are encouraging ways to remain in verbal contact as well as on-screen. We want to maintain a consistent and reassuring presence in your child’s life during this potentially stressful time.

● These distance learning days will count as school instructional days. Therefore it is important that each child participates in the online learning every day. Teachers will be taking attendance based upon a multitude of verifications such as: evidence that students are online and participating, as well as the completion of assignment or attendance of an online meeting.

● Students who are not participating online will receive a call from the teacher or other school staff member to see if families are in need of assistance with technology. Attendance daily is important. If a child is sick and unable to participate in learning on a certain day, the parent/guardian should email the teacher accordingly.

● Special education and support services staff are working to provide learning modifications and support to students with special needs. These staff members are also available by e-mail (they will get back to you via e-mail or phone) to support families during this time.

● Our technology staff has been working to communicate with families to make devices available to students and to help families gain access to the internet. Should a family need assistance with this please email or call the designated technology person associated with your child’s school.

● Chromebooks have been made available for pick-up at Seymour Middle School with the final day of pick-up being Saturday, March 21. Parents/guardians should drive up to the front to receive the device after completing the information required in the link https://docs.google.com/forms/d/1N8iYbfmBGx1LqRT0fvrNblM5UrzFWO1ZjiBcc-QZy8Ls/edit?fbclid=IwAR1EcWlgCRZjfiYjJN4JDTFPp9152Rd8_yhZDJKXw6L_65YVm7hkcfc_MHTgk

● In the event, you do not have Internet access at your home, please use this link from Comcast where those who do not have access to the Internet, can receive it free for 60 days. Please see the
link below for information on 2 months of free internet service in response to COVID-19: https://www.internetessentials.com/covid19

● No 504 meetings or PPTs will be held during these weeks schools are closed.

School Calendar

● April vacation will take place as scheduled even if we are still utilizing distance learning. This will give our families and staff the much needed time they need to reenergize and to connect which we all know is needed now more than ever.

● The Governor of Connecticut has waived the 180 day school year requirement. These distance learning days will count as school days. We anticipate that school will close as currently scheduled for this school year, with the last student day being June 12, 2020.

● Graduation is still scheduled for June 12, 2020 at this time.

Lunch For All

● We will continue to provide lunch 3 days a week for pick up at Seymour Middle School. Pick up times are between 11:00 and 1:00. On Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday.

We want to reiterate that Seymour Public Schools recognizes this is a concerning time for all and that no digital plan will ever replace your child’s teacher. Our students in grades K-12 should have approximately four hours of work each school day in order to keep them focused and to continue their learning the best way possible. All principals, teachers, and staff will periodically check in to assess and receive feedback about what you may be seeing at home and what may need to be adjusted. We want to thank you in advance for your patience and partnership! As always, all staff are here to help in any way needed to ensure an equitable learning experience for students. Please note that during this time of working remotely, our staff will be expected to be actively engaged in work during the hours of 8:00am -2:00pm and to be available for calls, video conferencing if the teacher chooses, email and messaging exchanges, and the like. All staff that are expected to work will be available by email or other form of acceptable electronic communication to support students who are working on these learning assignments, assist families, or reply to questions or requests.

Please continue to look on the following mediums for any communications from our schools:

● Seymour Schools Facebook
● Seymour Schools website
We would like all to remember that flexibility is the key to support distance learning along with supporting individual students and families. Please understand that this is a new process for everyone and we may need to make changes as we go, but remember it is the students for whom we are here. Keeping their learning in mind and us making our best efforts to achieve this, will help us to get through this.

If you have any questions about COVID-19, please call 2-1-1. Please be assured that my team will continue to monitor the situation daily and will keep you informed as changes occur.

Please make every effort to keep your families safe and healthy.

Sincerely,

Michael Wilson
Superintendent