

RICHARD M. DELMORO  
Superintendent of Schools  
richard.delmoro@ecsdm.org

Our people making the difference.  
A National *Race to the Top* District.  
Member of "League of Innovative Schools"



223 Wisner Avenue  
Middletown, NY 10940-3298  
Phone (845) 326-1158  
Fax (845) 326-1225  
www.middletowncityschools.org

March 28, 2020

Dear Middletown City Schools community,

Wow! What a two weeks it has been. I don't think anyone in our school community, or across our nation, could have imagined how the public health crisis COVID-19 would impact education communities. Never have schools been closed for this length due to a health crisis. Schools today encompass so many critical services for communities across the nation, and our community is no different. School districts ensure students are provided with personalized academic experiences, receive proper nutrition, have reliable transportation to and from school, and with resources or referrals to community services. The list goes on and on. Middletown, while keeping in mind our taxpayers who fund these critical services, is proud our schools have become centers of the community. We pride ourselves on this, and continue to bring our vision to life: EVERY STUDENT. EVERY DAY.

As we begin our third week of closure, it's my hope you have used this time away from traditional school to engage in academic experiences, either through our remote learning HUB, connections with instructors, or the use of our PreK-6 academic bundles. Additionally, I hope you took some time to rejuvenate your spirit, spend time with loved ones, and keep yourselves, and those you love, healthy. For me, this time of extended closure has reaffirmed my belief we can persevere and plan for the future with a renewed sense of purpose. **All students can succeed.** Our community has come together in so many ways. We've provided over 50,000 meals during this closure to children ages 18 and under. Our instructional staff made countless personal connections to their students through phone calls and/or emails, and we gave students in our community over 5,000 books to keep literacy a critical focus.

While these acts are powerful, I clearly still understand this time is a challenge. As we anticipate moving into a period of extended closure, it is critical for our entire community to remember our district is here as a support. We need to be flexible with our expectations, as well as provide you with accurate, timely updates. Please know, as we receive guidance from the Governor and the New York State Education Department (NYSED), we share these updates with our school community. Thank you for your patience as we move toward a more formal remote learning environment for our entire school district. This new learning environment will require us to be creative, make decisions with flexibility and be aware there is every possibility we may need to change our path to adjust to the needs of our teachers, students, and families.

**On Friday, the Governor's office announced a required extension to our closure until April 15.** Schools in New York are prohibited from opening until such time as the Governor lifts the mandate. The Governor committed to reviewing his plan in another two weeks. **At this time, Middletown Schools will remain closed until April 15.**

Outlined below is Middletown's plan to address remote learning during the period of extended closure. Please know, this plan is fluid to the extent the Governor or NYSED requires districts in New York to meet different mandates.

### **Instructional Expectations *for* Remote Learning:**

- ❑ Students in grades K-12 will continue to use remote learning through the period of closure.
- ❑ New instruction/materials will be introduced at all grade levels beginning on April 15. Teachers will continue to provide guidance and support on a daily basis.
- ❑ Our district created a [remote learning HUB](#) with valuable resources to add to materials teachers assign.
- ❑ To the extent possible, **and varying by grade levels/course/subject area**, instruction will emphasize technology platforms with which our teachers and students are familiar. There will be a need for regular, consistent online collaboration with teachers. Continuous feedback will be a critical component in the success of this learning experience. We will emphasize age-appropriate ways for students to interact with teachers via video, audio, chat, or discussion boards. We will standardize across our district and utilize Cisco WebEx as our remote learning platform for video conferencing learning experiences.
- ❑ Some differences across grade levels/courses/subject areas are to be expected. This is not a one size fits all approach. **Student participation in the remote learning experience during this period of extended closure is required, attendance will be recorded and submitted assignments and activities will be graded beginning on April 15. Families should continue to use Infinite Campus to monitor grades.**
- ❑ The content of new learning will be determined at the building level and will be presented to students and families directly from teachers. As agreed upon, teachers will be available to students and families for **two hours per day Monday through Friday**. Teachers will provide students/families with their specific schedules in the coming days. *If you need support in acquiring specific teacher schedules please contact your building administration.*
- ❑ Learning objectives will be communicated to students with each lesson. Content and skills will be introduced in a variety of ways. Teachers will track student progress to ensure participation and check-in with students and parents. New materials will be graded.
- ❑ A variety of formative (during the learning) and summative (after the learning) assessments will be intentionally planned, and made clear to students. Timely feedback will be given to students.
- ❑ Administrators, counselors and other support personnel will be available to support our students and their families.

### **Resources to Support Remote Learning:**

- ❑ A second phase of academic bundles will be made available for pick-up for grades PreK-6 the week of April 6. Please refer to the district [website](#) on a regular basis for announcements and updates.
- ❑ Teachers have autonomy to use tools like Google classroom, email and Screencastify to record and share videos and post assignments. All of these resources, combined with online access to traditional "print" materials will provide each student with a valuable remote learning experience.
- ❑ As agreed upon, teachers will be available to students and families for **two hours per day Monday through Friday**. Teachers will provide students/families with their specific schedules in the coming days. *If you need support in acquiring specific teacher schedules please contact your building administration.*
- ❑ Administrators, counselors and other support personnel will be available to support our students and their families.
- ❑ A device distribution will be held for students in grades K-6 beginning the week of March 30. This distribution is an opportunity for students who don't have access to a device to be provided with one. We are still fine tuning specifics related to the distribution of devices to over 4,000 students. I expect these details will be available on the [website](#) in the coming days.

### **Changes to the Third Quarter *as a result of* the Extended Closure:**

- ❑ The third quarter/marking period will end on April 13. This date change was needed due to the closure.
- ❑ March 12 through April 13 should be used to make up work. Students have up to May 1 to turn in any outstanding work for the third quarter so the work can be used in the calculation of their third quarter grade. **There will be no third quarter quarterly exams for any students.**
- ❑ It is my expectation this unusual period of closure doesn't negatively impact a student's grades. Our teachers are true professionals, and I am confident they will continue to use their judgment to support each and every student during this unprecedented closure.

### **Family Support *and* Engagement in Learning:**

- ❑ Families are an essential component to the success of this shift to remote learning. Consider setting up a daily routine/schedule, including healthy eating (please refer to our [website](#) for meal distribution locations and times) and sleeping habits; create a daily routine which includes quiet work time, outdoor physical activity and time to just have fun.
- ❑ Try to carve out time each day to talk to your learner about his/her work and promote literacy by reading to your child and encouraging him/her to read independently.
- ❑ As caregivers, we have a tendency to intervene quickly and offer support when our children struggle with work. However, we know academic struggle is a key component of learning. Although we may be inclined to quickly reach out to a teacher when a student reaches a challenge, teaching our students how to self-advocate and persevere is an important skill in the learning process. With practice, students will become more comfortable and skillful with our remote learning experiences.
- ❑ Think about limiting TV watching, gaming, social media and unproductive computer time outside of remote learning experiences.

### **District Support *for students and families throughout the* Period of Closure:**

- ❑ Ask for support when it's needed. Our school doors may be closed, but our school staff is still available to our families. Use email to contact any of our counselors or clinicians. If you are not sure who to contact, email your principal and they can connect you with someone who can help.
- ❑ Administrators, counselors and other support personnel will be available to support our students and their families.
- ❑ Please utilize the [Remote Learning HUB](#) to access tutorials, videos, and supports related to technical services.
- ❑ As agreed upon, teachers will be available to students and families for **two hours per day Monday through Friday. Specific schedules will vary depending on grade level/course/subject area and teacher course load.**

During this period of transition, I respectfully ask for your continued patience as we work to serve our school community in the best way possible. I do expect our plan to need some refinement as we deal with unknown challenges connected to this public health crisis. When there is much uncertainty, it's important to distinguish what we can control from what we cannot. I for one, am choosing to focus on the silver linings demonstrated by our community instead of the negatives of this current health pandemic crisis. We are sincerely grateful for the continued support of our school community. Our district envisions continuing to provide layers of support to our instructional staff as well as our students and their families.

My hope is, with each day that passes, we are all finding ourselves a bit more comfortable with this new way of learning. We will continue to do all we can to support our entire school community through this most difficult time.

Your continued partner in education,

*Richard Del Moro*

Richard Del Moro, Superintendent of Schools