

Tuesday, April 21, 2020: District email

Good afternoon middle school and high school families and students,

On March 15, 2020, Governor Walz issued Emergency Executive Order 20-02, which directed schools to close to students and engage in a planning period from March 18 until March 27. During this closure period, school and district staff were directed to construct a continuity of education plan that would be delivered via distance learning. Governor Walz specifically tasked districts to create plans for distance learning that work for our entire community, giving careful consideration for students in a variety of areas including those families who do not have access to technology, students receiving special education services, multilingual learners, students experiencing homelessness, and students who rely on meals served at school.

On March 25, the Governor issued Emergency Executive Order 20-19, which mandated that schools implement a distance learning period. The purpose of the distance learning period is to provide continuity of education during the COVID-19 pandemic while also preserving the health, safety, and lives of Minnesota's students, educators, and the broader public.

I want to thank all of the parents, students, and community members who have taken the time to reach out to share how they feel on this topic and to share what they are experiencing during this unprecedented time. We are grateful to the many among you who have advocated thoughtfully and respectfully for both the pass/no pass (P/NP) and opt-in letter grade approaches, many of whom have acknowledged how difficult this decision is and who have also shown grace in understanding other points of view.

At the April 13 board meeting, we presented a P/NP grading plan and were tasked by the Board to consider a high school model in which students could opt in to a letter grade. After looking at the issue again, we still believe the original plan is the best course of action. This decision to move forward with a P/NP plan for grades 6-12 was reaffirmed at last night's School Board Special Work Session.

We are encouraged by the fact that the NCAA has released guidance on the issue that will hold students harmless, and that postsecondary institutions across the country are discussing the same. Specifically in Minnesota, the MnSCU system, private colleges, and the University of Minnesota system are working together and will soon be issuing guidance.

While we recognize that a P/NP grading system for this semester will cause disappointment and frustration for some, we believe this is the right decision. We want to reassure families that student work during this pandemic will be valued and our expectations remain high, but students will not be penalized for not being able to perform competitively under these circumstances. Our goal is to continue to support our students' learning, build connections with them, and find ways to support them during this distance learning period.

Students, please know that we will do everything we can to mitigate the effects of a P/NP approach to grading. We will make available a letter from me and other administrators that

explains the rationale for the decision for your use in the future as you see fit. We will work with any post-secondary institution of your choosing to ensure that you are not penalized by this decision.

We've pulled together an FAQ doc to address some of the questions we know are out there. Please find that resource [here](#).

Thank you for your understanding and continued partnership.

Sincerely,

Wayne A. Kazmierczak, Ph.D.

Superintendent