



EASTERN LANCASTER COUNTY SCHOOL DISTRICT

March 17, 2020

Dear Parent or Guardian,

I am writing to update you on the District's most current plans to address the coronavirus pandemic (Covid-19). As of March 16, 2020, ALL activities hosted by the District are suspended indefinitely, including all extracurricular activities. We will communicate with you as the scenario evolves and most certainly as we begin easing ourselves back into full swing once the Governor gives the "all clear" to do so. In the interim, please see the information below about what the District is doing to support families and the community.

- **Online learning capability:** Currently, the District is unable to acquire approval for an online, fully digital learning experience by the Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE). PDE must approve our plan because of a Federal Statute commonly called "FAPE" (Free and Appropriate Public Education) that guarantees equal access and programming for ALL learners. While the majority of our teachers are ready, capable, and eager to go fully online, we have a few challenges remaining including: 1) limited access by some of our learners in remote parts of the district; 2) fully accommodating our students with special needs and; 3) figuring out how our specials teachers (particularly in art and technology) can teach effectively without the "hands on" experience. The Statute is *emphatic* about FAPE. Once we have these issues worked-out and if some relief is provided by the Federal Department of Education through PDE, we believe we have everything in place to offer a robust digital experience. Stay tuned...
- **Online learning resources:** Currently, the District is providing online resources that you can use with your learners at home to keep them academically engaged. Those resources are posted on our website on the homepage called "**ELANCO At-Home Learner Resources**". Teachers are free to provide some guidance and can communicate and interact online with their students. Some teachers will recommend some additional resources as well. Teachers cannot "grade" or evaluate work in an official capacity and cannot at this point hold learners accountable for work and activities that they do because of FAPE. At this point, activities are enrichment and engagement in nature.
[Note: We are aware that elementary learners were unable to grab computer chargers on their way out last Friday...we are creating a plan to make those available to you soon and ordered some extras a few weeks ago, but they have not arrived to date. Please refer to the District website as well as the Remind App and District social media for details on

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how you can obtain chargers for computers of elementary learners. We also have arriving soon “hot spots” to enable those homes without connectivity to get connected].

- **Food Distribution:** The district was able to establish and get approval for food distribution over the past weekend. While it is more complicated than it really should be, we were able to navigate Federal rules and began distributing food yesterday, March 16. At this writing, distribution sites are: New Holland Mennonite Church (18 Western Avenue, New Holland) and Eastern Lancaster County Library (11 Chestnut Drive, New Holland). We are providing a lunch and next day breakfast for ANY child public, private or homeschooled up to 18 years old. The child or children in a family must however be present at the pick-up site to verify legitimacy. You may contact the Director of Food Service at jami.leisey@elanco.org for more information. We hope to be partnering with CrossNet Ministries to increase the penetration of our food distribution network.
- **Contact with Buildings.** Per the President’s and Governor’s direction we are operating a minimal skeletal crew here. Administrators will be in and out of the buildings periodically. Office voice mail boxes will be checked frequently. All District-wide communication will be placed on the District website. Any urgent messages will be sent via voice mass telephone messenger from the Superintendent’s office. The District will continue to use the Remind App for communication as well.

The situation is evolving rapidly. We, the District officials, are doing our best to balance our response with the many needs and variables associated with these decisions. We continue to receive regular updates from our professional organizations, colleagues, the CDC, Pennsylvania Department of Health and PDE. We are receiving nearly “real-time” updates on Covid-19 related events as they occur throughout the Commonwealth.

Be well.

Thank you.

Sincerely,



Robert M. Hollister, Ed.D.
Superintendent of Schools

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