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Dear NCS students and families:

Over a week ago, our Virginia schools were closed by the Governor in the wake of growing concerns about the COVID-19 pandemic. Thanks to the preparedness and the spirit of goodwill of our teachers and staff, we embarked into the first week with a focus on staying connected to our students and families, providing for the continuity of learning as required by the state, and making food available to all students who requested it. Thanks to the many community businesses for supporting our efforts. Also thanks to the many families who have reached out to express your appreciation for these efforts by our staff.

It was our desire this past week, and continues to be in the days to come, to establish lines of communication and to do our best to offer support, not knowing how long the mandated closure will continue. We anticipate that the Governor will make a revised announcement this coming week. At this point, we have not received any advance notice about whether the school closures will be prolonged, nor for how long, if the closures are extended.

The guidance from the Virginia Department of Education regarding academic expectations during the mandated school closures has been extremely helpful as we do not want to put extra pressure or stress on families about keeping up with schoolwork, nor overload students with too much screen time. Our goal is to strike a balance between providing resources and learning opportunities, having our teachers provide support, but not penalizing any student or adding undue stress.

This sudden transition to providing continuity of learning during a mandated school closure is new to our teachers too. They have done an extraordinary job of reaching out to students and families and providing activities and resources. As is to be expected, teachers are working with families who expect and want a lot of resources for their children and also there are working families who are overwhelmed with the disruptions caused by the pandemic and genuinely do not have any additional capacity to help their children manage schoolwork. Teachers are developing and providing a wealth of learning resources. We want our students and families, however, to access it as it fits into their schedules and not to become overwhelmed.

To that end, we want...

- to provide suggested activities that will help students retain skills;
- to leverage interactive activities available through online sources;
- to provide equity through paper-based activities for students without internet access;
- to ensure students and families that they are in control of this process and all activities for grades K-12 are completely optional and will not be graded (keeping in mind that some high school students may be in dual enrollment courses and, therefore, have assignments to complete for their community college credits); and
- to affirm that we are fortunate to have a variety of technology and other resources available to assist with an event such as this; but we also believe that, for most students, the most productive learning occurs under the guidance of effective teachers in our classrooms and look forward to returning when we are permitted to do so.

We miss our students, and our teachers and staff would like nothing more than to return to normal. Until then, we are here for you and encourage you to contact our teachers, principals, or myself if you have questions or assistance in any way. Please complete the home survey that was sent out last week as we continue to assess student's needs. Please continue visiting the NCS website for current information under the tab COVID-19 updates. School buildings are currently closed to public access, but staff is available by phone and email. If you are unable to reach someone at your child's school, you may also call the School Board Office at 679-2330. We will continue to be "Raider Strong" throughout this process and work together for the safety of all.

Sincerely,

Dr. Gina Wohlford