

## **Assistant Superintendent's Update April 15, 2020**

Dear Island Park Families,

I hope this email finds you and your family well! I would like to provide you with a few important updates as they relate to teaching and learning during the school closure.

The District's approach to continuity of learning was developed to allow staff and students the flexibility to communicate, do meaningful work, and provide supports to the greatest extent possible. With the school closure now extended through April 29<sup>th</sup>, the District has shifted its approach to allow for more introduction of "new learning" while allowing for the continued reinforcement of skills. This approach encourages students to stay engaged in a variety of learning opportunities throughout the closure. Over the course of the last three weeks, our teachers have done a remarkable job making this transition with many choosing to experiment with new tools and methods. We are very appreciative of our teachers' hard work as well as your patience and support throughout the school closure.

In addition to engaging our students in meaningful learning, teachers and administrators have held discussions about grading and assessment during the school closure. The Island Park UFSD has a reliable grading system/policy that ensures that each student's grades accurately reflect his/her degree of accomplishment of the expected learning outcomes for each course. To that extent, we have informed you that LOMS teachers will provide a third-quarter achievement grade for their students, formulated using the District's Grading Policy, considering only exams, quizzes, and other formative assessments such as projects, presentations, or other work completed through the last date which students were in-session, Friday, March 13, 2020. The effort grade integrates effort demonstrated throughout the quarter before distance learning began; it also integrates effort demonstrated by students through a variety of engagement measures during two and a half weeks of distance learning.

We recognize that during this extended school closure, where the circumstances of teaching and learning have changed dramatically from a classroom setting to a digital platform, we acknowledge the challenges with assigning grades for digital assignments. We understand that there is an inherent inequity issue, amongst students, as some students have a limited number of digital resources at home to help them complete digital learning assignments while others have several. As a result, we are examining how we will provide for a fair system of grading student achievement and effort in both the elementary and middle schools as we move into the final lap of school closure. We are currently working with our teachers and administrators to generate ideas that will help us ensure grading is fair and equitable for the remainder of the 2019-2020 academic year. This requires us to consider plans in the event of partial closure between April and May with re-opening in May or June as well as should schools remain closed.

Dependent upon the ultimate length of the closure, the District is researching alternative grading practices. In addition, we are working with our partners in the Long Beach City School

District to align our 4<sup>th</sup> Quarter grading practices for our 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade students. In the next few weeks, we will compile our ideas for “Emergency Grading Procedures” and present them to the Board of Education for approval. They will be shared with you as well. In the meanwhile, it is important that you continue to support your child to follow-through with all assignments. Active engagement over the long haul is essential to minimizing learning loss during this period.

In addition to daily assignments, please note that our website has numerous resources including: social and emotional learning, student and parent wellness, and special education, including related services. Our mental health staff is available to provide support as needed by telephone and other forms of telepractice. Finally, if you have any questions or concerns, please continue to use the “virtual hand raise” code in the email subject to communicate with your child’s teacher(s) and principal.

We remind you that during the extended school closure, please continue to practice social distancing, take care of yourself and loved ones, and take time for you and your child’s emotional well-being.

Stay safe and healthy!

Fondly,

Vincent Randazzo  
Assistant Superintendent  
Island Park UFSD