



Yorktown Central School District



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Dear Yorktown School Community,

I hope this update finds you and your family well. Fortunately, the storms from yesterday have moved away and better weather is upon us. Yesterday's storms were certainly powerful and resulted in widespread power outages in the region. The local utility companies did an extraordinary job in their response to this storm. I understand that some families in our community still do not have power at this hour. Some faculty and staff also do not have electricity at this time. We will exercise patience in the posting and completion of assignments for those who did not have power yesterday and/or today.

As recent information involving schools has made the news, I thought it appropriate to provide you an update. As many have heard, the Mayor of New York City announced that New York City Schools will be closed through the remainder of the school year. Later that same day, the Governor announced that schools were in fact not closed for the remainder of the school year. Naturally, this conflicting information leads to several questions. First, only the Governor can reopen schools at this point as it is his order that has shuttered them. If a school system chooses to extend the closure, beyond the Governor's directive, as New York City indicated, they do so at the risk of financial peril in the form of lost state aid that would ultimately place an insurmountable tax burden on the local community.

All schools in New York State, including Yorktown, have been closed by the Governor until at least April 30, and we will continue to respect the Governor's closure directive. In the interim, we will continue to work to answer the many questions that we have with regard to the implications of the closure, the cancellation of state exams, and the implications that this extended closure will have on the normal spring activities that usually take place within our schools.

Some of the other questions that we are thoughtfully answering include grading methodology for the 4th quarter at the middle and high school levels. We are working to determine the implications of not having regents exams and the impact on fourth quarter grades, final course grades, and course placements for next school year. We are eagerly awaiting further guidance from the NYS Education Department. Given the fluidity of the situation, a decision for grading at this time would not be the most prudent course. However, regardless of the grading methodology, my request of students does not change. Students should continue to complete all assigned work to the best of their ability. Students should take all work as seriously as possible and submit all assignments as they would if schools were physically in session. This way, regardless of the methodology that is ultimately employed, they will be positioned for success. Once we have definitive guidance on the duration of the closure from the Governor's Office and our specific questions answered by the State Education Department, then it would be appropriate to make a decision for grading as the implications of this decision far exceed just the factors that are visible at the surface.

Spring athletics, performance music concerts, the spring musicals, and some of the senior events are also items that we are working through. There are many moving parts, and each decision has corollary effects or tangential impacts on other aspects of our organization. Thus, the information with which we are working is still incomplete at this time, and we will await further clarification from the Governor's Office and the New York State Education Department. Until then, I want you to be assured that our team is working tirelessly to explore the different options available to us, down to the very smallest details, to ensure that our students are provided these important experiences to the greatest extent practicable. In the midst of this we are continuing with some of the regular business functions of the District, as we would normally do at this time of year, to ensure that our district is positioned for the 2020-21 school year. In spite of the challenges, we must be able to not only focus on managing the present moment, but also planning forward. We continue to work on developing our course schedules for the fall, student placements, and a budget that provides students the best and most comprehensive education possible while also being extremely sensitive to taxpayers.

I leave you with a quote from Ernest Hemingway. As I sat at my dining room table on the night before Easter, I reflected on the sad circumstances of our region. Many thoughts flooded my mind. I thought about the many families whose lives have been turned upside down by this awful virus. I thought about the dire circumstances that so many people are facing and the many lives that have been lost.

I thought about my 80-year-old mother who fortunately is well, but would be alone on a holiday that means so much to my family. I recall closing my eyes and trying to will the better days ahead to fruition, and the Hemingway quote entered my mind. His words comforted me. The quote reads,

“Night is always darker before the dawn and life is the same, the hard times will pass, everything will get better and the sun will shine brighter than ever.”

Everytime I look up at the shining sun, I take comfort in knowing that better days are ahead.

As further information related to our schools becomes available, please know that I will certainly share it with you. In the interim, I will be hosting two “Storytime with Dr. Hattar” events tomorrow evening. The information for those sessions is included below. I generally target our early elementary students with these read aloud sessions, but if you think your middle school or high school child would enjoy a good, inspiring story, please know they are welcome to join. I find the power of reading (and writing) to be amazingly comforting during difficult times, and no student is ever too old to have a story read to them.

Wednesday, April 15 7:00 p.m. - 7:30 p.m.	Storytime with Dr. Hattar: Grades K-1 students ➤ https://zoom.us/j/6262934722?pwd=SkZueXVFRFpYNmkzc2RlRlpUdXY4Zz09 ➤ Meeting ID: 626 293 4722 Password: 064003
Wednesday, April 15 7:30 p.m. - 8:00 p.m.	Storytime with Dr. Hattar: Grades 2-3 students ➤ https://zoom.us/j/6262934722?pwd=SkZueXVFRFpYNmkzc2RlRlpUdXY4Zz09 ➤ Meeting ID: 626 293 4722 Password: 064003

I wish you and your family good health during this most challenging time.

Respectfully,



Dr. Ron Hattar