COVID-19 MIDLAND PUBLIC SCHOOLS UPDATE

It has been just over a week since the Governor’s order to close schools. Midland Public School has taken many steps to assist our students, staff and community and is committed to continue to assist going forward. This event is very different than any event any of us have seen before. There are many unknowns at this time, and unlike many crisis events we have seen in our lifetimes, this crisis—this pandemic—does not have a predictable end date. There are many unanswered questions at this time. We wait on more guidance from our Governor, Michigan Department of Education (MDE) and National and State health officials. Information, as we know it, changes almost hourly.

On-Line Learning Opportunities

As you know, Midland Public Schools is providing teacher-connected learning opportunities. Our educators have been doing a great job communicating with MPS students in order to keep them connected to learning.

⇒ State and federal guidance on E-learning does not allow an online learning experience to be a replacement for in-class instruction. In fact, there could be legal implications if we attempted to cover instruction and curriculum as there would be many possible inequities. MDE and the Governor issued these same statements last week as well.

⇒ Midland Public Schools is offering these learning opportunities with the hope that parents and students find them useful and will take advantage of them. We cannot require them or grade them. We will attempt to provide feedback on student work.

Academic Grades, Marking Periods, State Testing, AP & IB Testing

The MDE has requested a federal waiver to allow for no state-mandated assessments and relief on school accountability report cares. M-STEP and other State Assessments will not be given this spring.

We have been in contact with the College Board (AP and ACT) as well as SAT and IB for guidance. It appears IB exams in May will not occur, however, students can still earn their IB Diploma and certificates. IB information: https://www.midlandps.org/IB-Student-Parent-Letter

AP and College Board have been working on free remote learning sources and a new at-home test. The traditional face-to-face test will not occur.


MPS has been working on contingency plans to adjust marking periods if school re-starts on April 6, as well as plans if the closure is extended. We have also been exploring plans if the school year is extended due to required make-up days.

MPS Food Service during Pandemic Closure

MPS has been approved by the MDE to provide breakfast and lunch for children from 0 to 18 years of age; as well as students 18-26 years old if they have an IEP in place. These meals will be provided Monday through Friday.

Children do not have to be present to take advantage of these free meals. Parents, grandparents, family friends, etc. may pick up the meals for the child.

Last week over 20,000 meals were enjoyed by community children. Families either picked the meals up at MPS elementary schools & MHS or were delivered via MPS school buses to pick up points throughout the community. Thank you to Chartwells, our food service provider, as well as the MPS transportation team and volunteers coordinated by the United Way of Midland County, who have done a wonderful job preparing and delivering these vital meals for our community’s children during these tough times.

A huge thank you also to LaLonde’s Market and Ace Hardware for donating thousands of bags used to hold the food being picked up and delivered during this closure!
There are Many Questions During This Closure ...  
Unfortunately, Not Many Answers At This Time

Will schools re-open on April 6? This question has been asked many time to the MDE and the Governor’s Office. The answers we are consistently hearing is that not enough information is known at this time. I would expect sometime this week or next that we will receive more guidance on this issue. Some states are targeting May 1, and others are closing their schools for the remainder of this academic year.

What will occur with graduation, sports, prom and other key events this spring? This is a question that has come our way several times this past week. It is a little too soon to make a quality decision at this time. Needless to say, social distancing would be very difficult to practice during these events. If the Governor announces a longer closure or announces April 6 school will be back in session, we will begin to make the decisions about the spring activities and sports based on that decision.

How have employee groups been affected and what might occur if there is a need to close longer? Midland Public Schools has multiple employee groups with some being salaried and others hourly.

The District has committed to compensating ALL employee groups during the ten days of school cancellation despite not knowing if make-up dates will be required. If the ten days are required to be made up, the District will be required to pay hourly employees for that time. Many hourly employees, such as paraprofessionals and bus drivers are scheduled to work the 180 days school is in session. By compensating these employee groups during the closure (10 days) we may have committed the District to 190 days of compensation. We will not know if we have committed the District to additional pay until MDE provides guidance on the need for “make-up days.” At this time, ALL employee groups have been given the opportunity to be paid. We know some hourly employees have chosen to not work and receive compensation and others have applied for unemployment as an employee affected by the temporary closure. The Governor expanded unemployment last week to assist workers affected by the pandemic.

If the State determines that there is a need for longer school closure, we will review all MPS employees’ work situations and determine the proper path forward based on guidance from MDE and the Governor’s Office.

Will the school year be extended for make-up days? We have asked MDE and the Governor’s Office this question. The response has been that no decision has been made at this time, which only makes sense until there is more known about the need for a longer period of closure.

I know there is a lot of uncertainty for us all during these unusually difficult times. As a history teacher, I believe we can look at what is often termed the “Greatest Generation” for guidance. On many, many occasions, we read about and hear accounts of the Greatest Generation (born in the early 1900’s, enduring the Great Depression, World War II and more) who pulled together and sacrificed so much for the betterment of all.

As a School District, Community, State and Nation, could this be our time to shine for the betterment of all?

Stay tuned. You have our assurance that we will continue to send updates and information as we receive word from the State.

May you and your family stay strong and well,

Michael E. Sharrow, Superintendent, Midland Public Schools
HEALTH & WELLBEING

During this unprecedented time in our world, it seems there is COVID-19 information coming at us from every direction. At this time more than ever, self-care and family-care are important keys to help us cope with the stress.

Midland Public Schools cares about the safety, health and wellbeing of our students and MPS family. A great site for families to support kids’ social and emotional development and wellbeing is called Confident Parents Confident Kids. Please access the link below to find many great resources including a blog that is updated daily with resources and family activities to promote wellness. Here is the link: Confident Parents Confident Kids.

Congrats to our High School Varsity Hockey Teams for these Accolades:

HH Dow High:
First Team All-State: Luke Blasy <> Second Team All-State: Austin leuter & Collin Lemanski
Honorable Mention All-State: Billy VanSumeren <> Academic All-State: Austin leuter & Luke Blasy
<> Team Academic All-State <> The Charger team made it to the Frozen Four (last four left in the tournament).
Unfortunately, the tournament has been suspended and is unlikely to continue.

Midland High:
SVL First team: Matthew Babinski <> SVL Honorable Mention: Nathan Witt, Ty Pritchett, Matthew Witt <> Academic All State Team <> Academic All State Individual: Tyler Pritchett, Nathan Witt, Matt Babinski <> All State Division One Second Team: Matthew Witt, Matthew Babinski <> All State Honorable Mention Division One: Nathan Witt

Congratulations to both MPS High School Hockey Teams for a great season!

We’d like to share some fun book with you and your child …
(Stay tuned … We will continue to share more staff members reading fun books in the coming weeks)

As a way to continue to celebrate March is Reading Month, MPS team members are reading fun books. Click on the links below to hear some fun books read by MPS PrePrimary Center team members. Enjoy!

⇒ Ms. Pam Sharrow, Director of the PrePrimary Center, knows all and sees all when it comes to the education of our youngest learners. She is reading, “Hooway for Wodney Wat” by Helen Lester. https://www.midlandps.org/mssharrow-book1

⇒ Ms. Amy Gates is the friendly, competent office professional that helps students when they come to the office. She is reading, “It’s Okay to Make Mistakes” by Todd Parr https://www.midlandps.org/msamy-book1

⇒ Mr. Dave McDonald helps keep the Carpenter Street School clean and in good repair for the students and staff. Appropriately, he is reading “Dave Gets in Trouble” by David Shannon https://www.midlandps.org/mrdave-book1

Congratulations to Northeast Middle School for achieving Level 4 Certification in Marzano High Reliability Schools (HRS), which means that Northeast has implemented “Standards-Referenced Reporting,” which requires teachers to report individual students’ progress related to specific standards. Using the HRS framework and indicators, schools can drive sustained, positive, and significant impacts on student achievement by synthesizing multiple complex initiatives into one harmonious system.

Congratulations to Principal DeBoer and the entire Viking staff and student body for being the first secondary building in the United States to earn a Marzano HRS Level 4 endorsement. This truly is a noteworthy accomplishment! We are proud of you!
MPS elementary school staff members do such a wonderful job of celebrating March is Reading Month and, unfortunately, their celebrations got cut short this year with the closures. One great example is all of the time and effort Chestnut Hill staff and students put into designing their doors. Here are just a few of them. Looks like they had a sports-themed reading celebration. Of course, I must say I’m kind of partial to the baseball doors. 😊

2020-2021 REGISTRATION IS NOW OPEN FOR OUR DISTRICT’S YOUNGEST LEARNERS

Two 4-Year Old Pre-School Programs Available.

Call MPS PrePrimary Center at Carpenter (923-6411) for info.

- IB-PYP Preschool: Follows the IB-PYP foundation that is the framework used by all MPS elementary schools. This is a competitively priced tuition program.

- Great Start Readiness Program (GSRP): State-funded quality preschool free for income-qualifying families. (Member of Regional Preschool Partnership). Click here to register:
  www.michiganpreschool.org

MPS Elementary Kindergarten Registration Now Open

Call your neighborhood school for registration and program information. All of the MPS elementary schools are listed on the back page of this Communique.

“wise thought to ponder …

“When you reach the end of your rope, tie a knot in it and hang on.”

— Franklin D. Roosevelt