March 19, 2020

Dear ICSD Students and Families,

We write in hopes that you are well and taking care of yourselves. Much of our world has been turned upside down due to COVID-19. And yet our phenomenal educators and support staff have come together and thoughtfully crafted plans to continue to provide the children of the Ithaca City School District community with access to continued learning and social and emotional support, as well as daily nutrition!

During the closure, we will provide students with access to instructional activities through digital and non-digital distance learning approaches. Our goal is to ensure that all students have digital and/or non-digital resources that allow them the option to engage in the content they had been learning while at school. Our union and district leadership have developed the following plan to support our young people and staff.

Given our commitment to equity and inclusion, a unified approach to alternative instruction will begin on March 25, 2020. We all want our children and families to have equal access to common learning experiences. In that vein, here’s what you can expect:

**PreK through 5th grade (primarily non-digital approach)**
- One time per week, classroom teachers will provide
  - 2 ELA activities
  - 2 math activities
  These activities will be printed and mailed to you if you would like, and they will be available on our district website (www.ithacacityschools.org) beginning March 25.
- One time per week, special area teachers will provide
  - 1 differentiated activity/video/resource per grade level on our website

**Elementary families, please fill out this form** by the evening of Sunday, March 22 so that we can learn:
- your preferences regarding mailed activities; and
- whether your child needs their instrument from school.

Don’t worry, we’ll call you if you don’t fill this out, as we understand access is not uniform.

**Sixth through 12th grade (digital approach)**
- One time per week, teachers will provide
1 activity per course
These will be provided through Google Classroom. Teachers will be sure to share classroom
codes with students.

- School Counselors and Deans will provide resources on social and emotional supports and shall
  continue to work on scheduling, as well as virtual course selection meetings.

**Secondary families, please fill out this form** by the evening of Sunday, March 22 so that we can
learn whether:
- your 6-12 child needs a Chromebook and does not have one for any reason;
- you need access to the internet ([click here](#)) to learn more about Spectrum’s free offer; and
- whether your child needs their instrument from school.

Don’t worry, we’ll call you if you don’t fill this out, as we understand access is not uniform.

**Special Education Programs and Services**
- Special education teaching modifications and guidance (SEIT, SCIS, Integrated Co-Teaching,
  Consultant Teacher D/I, Resource Room) will be maintained **given the current constraints** to
  maintain progress towards Individual Education Plans (IEP) goals.
- OT, PT, Speech, Social Workers, Adaptive PE, and Psychologists will be offering activities
  and/or home plans **given the current constraints** to maintain progress towards Individual
  Education Plans (IEP) goals as well as office hours to connect with students on their caseloads.
- All CPSE, CSE, and 504 meetings will be canceled through April 12, 2020.

**More information about supporting students with IEPs and 504s through distance learning will be
coming from your child’s Master Educator for Inclusion (MEI).**

All activities will focus on review of current content up until spring break and we will reassess if our
closure extends beyond that. Please know that due to equity and access, no grades will be assigned at this
time, nor will extra credit.

Digital professional development regarding Google Classroom, Google Drive, and other online resources
will be available to staff.

While some expect our approach to mirror college and university experiences with distance learning
and/or professional work-from-home arrangements, educating K-12 students in a digital environment
requires much different planning and preparation in that it must include specifically-designed,
developmentally-appropriate curriculum, materials, and activities, based on using digital platforms (a
novel experience for younger learners). This is why we are differentiating our approach in partnership
with our trusted educators and administrators.
We fully understand that every student’s situation is unique, and while these activities aren’t required for students to complete, we encourage you to leverage these resources to offer our young people regular opportunities to learn and grow, even outside of school.

We have developed all of these plans (and more) in partnership with our outstanding union leadership: Ithaca Teachers Association, Ithaca Principals and Directors Association, Education Support Professionals Ithaca, Employees Association, and Ithaca Substitute Association. We have been meeting to design a comprehensive plan and have spent hours crafting each detail together. Our union leadership also ensured that they gathered thoughtful feedback from their membership. Their collaboration and willingness to step in and go above and beyond for the children of the Ithaca City School District have been exceptional. Thank you to them.

Please contact your principal with any questions. This is uncharted territory, and we are here to support each other.

Thank you for your incredible parenting and partnership during this unbelievable time. Please take care of yourselves and your families.

Be well,

Luvelle Brown
Superintendent