April 24, 2020

Canton Community:

With COVID-19 causing so much disruption, our district and community leaders have had to address a wide range of challenges associated with delivering remote instruction, providing meals to students, ensuring board meetings proceed and deciding whether to cancel or postpone special events. I believe this pandemic has been a new learning experience for all of us. As we move into late spring and summer, I wish to keep our community informed on a variety of topics. I will attempt to outline some areas that the administrative team is currently working on (or has already made decision on) in regards to events in the district for the spring and summer. I will continue to keep you updated as we move forward into the spring and through the summer.

**Free Meals**

We are very fortunate to have the Canton Area Ministerium provide an integral program to families of our community. From the day this pandemic began, the Ministerium has spent countless hours providing food to our residence in need at four geographic locations throughout the district. The four areas are the local Canton community, Ralston, Ogdensburg, and Leroy. We continue to average around 175 meals distributed each week. We also successfully launched “Pop-Up Pantries” during the past month for our students, their families, and elderly community members.

As I shared last week, this service moved to food distribution once a week, starting this past Monday (April 20). We will continue to provide meals to families once a week, through the Memorial Day week. The final distribution date will be Tuesday, May 26. After this week, the local churches will look to begin the summer food program. More information about the summer food program will be available in the coming weeks.

**Canton Area School District Staff**

I continue to be proud and impressed with the work our teachers are doing with the students in our district. On March 31st, our students were asked to launch the first phase of our Continuity of Education Plan: Remediation and Enrichment. Teachers we asked to create, through online learning platforms, educational opportunities for all students that was based on pre-taught content, or was an extension of content that students already had during their time in class this school year. Our teachers have provided our students with valuable learning opportunities during this time. For those students who do not have technology devices or who have internet connectivity issues, our teachers created paper and pencil tasks for them to complete and return to the teacher.

As I am sure you are aware, schools today are more than just educational institutions. We are often faced with supporting our students social, emotional, and mental health. Along with supporting our teachers, some of our staff (paraprofessionals, school nurses, guidance counselors, Friendship House staff) reach out at least 1-2 times a week to students who need a more intensive intervention to ensure they are being supported during these pandemic times. I continue to be proud of these staff groups as they support our students.

Lastweek, Secretary of Education, Pedro Rivera, increased expectations for all public schools and grade levels in Pennsylvania. His expectations were that all students, in grade K-12, be offered Planned Instruction opportunities (Option #3). This means that our district will move from Option #2 (Remediation and Enrichment) to Option #3 (Planned Instruction) effective Monday, May 4, 2020. In order for our teachers to transition into this Planned Instruction, we will be providing our teaching staff with time for professional learning from next Wednesday, April 29 – Friday, May 1. Instruction for our students will resume on Monday, May 4th. Teachers will not be posting new material to their learning platform from April 29 – May 1. We will also be sending out our second wave (and final) set of paper and pencil packets during the week of May 4th.

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**Grading**

The district has received many questions around how students will be graded through the fourth nine weeks. Effective May 4th, teachers will be providing some new content material to our students. These assignments may be evaluated by teachers and returned to students with feedback (through comments or percentage points). Teachers will be maintaining grades for students based on the completion of these tasks, participation in zoom sessions, and completion of any other academic tasks assigned to students. Students will then receive a “pass” or “fail” for each of the final five weeks of school. The grade (pass or fail) that your child receives will not be printed on a report card, but will be maintained as part of a personal teacher files. The 4th nine-week grade will not go on a transcript for any students and will not count toward class ranks. Recall, our formal grading toward class rank and transcripts ended on March 13th this year when our education was disrupted by this pandemic. The 4th nine weeks will run from May 4th to the closing of school (May 29th for seniors and June 3rd for the rest of the student body)

**Graduation 2020**

Mr. Jacopetti has been working very diligently on making sure the Class of 2020 has a memorable graduation experience. We will be planning on virtual graduation on Friday, May 29, 2020, for our seniors. As we get closer to the virtual graduation date, more information will be forthcoming. I can assure you these plans have been shared with both families and students of the class of 2020. Should social distancing guidelines allow as we move into the summer, we are also looking to have an “in-person” graduation for our class. The latest date we would conduct an “in-person” graduation would be Friday, August 7, 2020.

**Canton School Board Meetings**

Due to concerns surrounding the COVID-19 pandemic, the Canton Area School District Board of Education will continue to hold all meetings online. A link for public viewing and/or participation will be posted on our webpage as well as advertised in a local paper not less 24 hours prior to the meeting.

**Re-entry Plan; Closing out the 2019-2020 School Year**

The administration is formulating a re-entry plan for the closure of the 2019-2020 school year.  The plan will allow students to collect personal items from both buildings.  Due to the current restrictions imposed by the Governor, we feel that we must wait until we are granted permission to bring in small groups of people to ensure we are following all social distancing guidelines set forth by the Governor and the Center for Disease Control (CDC). Our hope is to get clearer guidance on what this process can look like upon the “re-opening” that was recently announced by our Governor on May 8th. We patiently await their guidance, and I thank you for your understanding and patience with us on this matter.

**Preparation for 2020-2021 School Year**

It is not yet clear whether in-person classes will be held to start the 2020-21 school year. I anticipate that this decision will be made by Governor Wolf and the PA Department of Education over the summer months. Our wish is that we will be having students back in school buildings with elevated precautionary measures in the fall. We will do everything in our power to provide a safe and healthy learning environment for all. We are also preparing for the possibility that further closures may become necessary should COVID-19 continue to impact our community. The CASD teachers and staff will be ready to deliver online instruction should that situation arise.

On behalf of all the staff of the Canton Area School District, I want to continue to thank you for your time, patience, and support as we continue to navigate these unprecedented times. Together, I am confident we will come through this pandemic stronger than we were prior to the start. I am proud to serve as your superintendent, and more excited for what the future holds for our school district as we continue to live out our mission of Educating Every Child, Every Day, The Warrior Way!

Yours in Education,

Dr. Eric Briggs

Eric Briggs, D.Ed.

Superintendent of Schools

Canton Area School District