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Greetings:

By now, I am sure many of us, children and adults alike, are wondering – when will this ever end! We share that same sentiment at West Branch. Our faculty and staff greatly miss the children and are disappointed that we must wait until next August to be united in the traditional setting we call “school”. In the meantime, our teachers are working hard to prepare meaningful and reasonable assignments for our students. Like anything new, we are experiencing bumps as we work to balance school expectations with home realities, and we appreciate your patience.

As we look to move into Week #4 of our Continuity of Education (At-Home School) plan, we have formalized a few more pieces of the plan and are looking to revise other pieces. Today’s communication is being shared to outline this new information. Our biggest change is the shift from Review/Enrichment to Planned Instruction for our Middle School and High School students. For these students in Grades 5-12, that means we are moving from prior learning to new learning and ungraded work to graded work. What follows is a summary of our revised plan for all levels: Elementary, Middle School and High School. Further, I am providing some information about some standard school closing “stuff” and an update for our Seniors.

Continuity of Education (At-Home) Plan

Plan Overview

Elementary (Grades PreK – 4)

1. Elementary students will be provided a Review/Enrichment model during the period of school closure. The district may look to offer some Planned Instruction for Math with the last packet. Assignments/activities will be designed as paper/pencil activities that are prepared and organized into multi-week packets. The schedule of assignments will be as follows:

Reading and Math – Monday thru Friday (Daily Assignment)

Writing, Science, Social Studies – Monday thru Friday (Select Day Assignments)

Special Subjects – Monday thru Friday (Weekly Assignment)

2. Other Offerings: The District recognizes the importance of routine and its impact on the educational experience for young children. Additionally, our educational program is designed to address the whole child which, in addition to academics, includes social and emotional components. Accordingly, the following optional virtual activities are being offered for both students and parents: morning announcements, mindful moments, lunch bunches, coffee breaks, family engagement activities, and special events.

Middle School (Grades 5-8)

1. Middle School students will start a Planned Instruction format. Assignments/activities will be designed as online activities that are prepared and uploaded weekly. Students will be able to pick up their 1-to-1 school issued device for instruction. For students without internet accessibility at home, paper packets will be provided weekly. The schedule of assignments will be as follows:

English, Math, Science, Social Studies – Monday thru Friday (Daily Assignments)
Rotation/Quarterly Courses – Monday thru Friday (Weekly Assignment)

2. Other Offerings: The District recognizes the importance of routine and its impact on the educational experience for young children. Additionally, our educational program is designed to address the whole child which, in addition to academics, includes social and emotional components. Accordingly, the following optional virtual activities are being offered for students: morning announcements, mindful moments, student challenges, and special events.

High School (Grades 9-12)

1. High School students will start a Planned Instruction format. Assignments/activities will be designed as online activities that are prepared and uploaded weekly. Students will be able to utilize their 1-to-1 school issued device for instruction. For students without internet accessibility at home, paper packets will be provided weekly. The schedule of assignments will be as follows:

English, Math, Science, Social Studies – Monday thru Friday (Daily Assignments)
Elective Courses – Monday thru Friday (Weekly Assignments)

Student Expectations

For the Review/Enrichment model, students are strongly encouraged to participate and complete assignments to maintain, strengthen and enhance prior learning in an effort to minimize student regression.

For the Planned Instruction model, students are expected to participate in assignments designed around new learning that will be graded and used to calculate both marking period and final grades/progress marks as well as GPA and class rank.

Attendance and Accountability

Elementary (Grades PreK – 4)

1. Attendance - Attendance is not collected for the Review/Enrichment format.
2. Accountability – Students will be given the following Progress Marks for the 4th marking period:

P = Participation

PP = Partial Participation

NP = No Participation

*Note: Final Grades will be based on the first three marking periods

3. Grade promotion would still be dependent on the work demonstrated through March 13th. If retention concerns were not addressed prior to that point in time, the child will move forward a grade level.

Middle School & High School (Grades 5-12)

1. Attendance – Attendance is not collected during the period of Review/Enrichment. Attendance will be determined by participation for the period of Planned Instruction.

Teachers are planning for Asynchronous Learning.

Asynchronous means that students learn at different times. They are not required to be online with the teacher at set times each day. Students are able to make their own schedule which is more convenient and flexible for students and their families. This type of learning also allows students to work at their own pace. Please note that teachers may offer time for students to get online with the teacher in groups for those who would like that type of teacher assistance.

2. Accountability – Students will be given the following Grades and/or Progress Marks for the 4th marking period:

Students will receive a grade of **Participation (P)** or **No Participation (NP)** at the end of the fourth marking period.

- A **Participation (P)** would be given to students who “passed” with a 60% or higher. A **Participation (P)** would be converted and calculated as a 100% for the purposes of cumulative GPA, class rank, etc.
- A **No Participation (NP)** means there was not enough evidence to know that a student made progress. A **No Participation (NP)** would result in the final grade for the class being an average of the first three marking periods. For semester classes, the third marking period grade would be used as the final grade.
- Final exams for all classes have been canceled.
- Dual Enrollment exams will still occur with modifications determined by these testing organizations. We will communicate directly with students when this information is available.

School Closing Update

We plan to maintain our school closing date of Friday, June 5, 2020 as was previously board approved for our 2019-2020 school calendar. For your planning purposes, formal instruction will end on Friday, May 22, 2020 and the remaining time will be used for school closing activities, such as making up assignments, returning school property (laptops, books, calculators, instruments, etc.), culminating activities and locker/desk cleanout. A schedule will be created with assigned dates and times for parents and/or students to come to the school later in May to handle these school closing responsibilities.

Class of 2020 Update

We have a small group of staff who will be working with the Senior Class Officers to coordinate end-of-year events for our graduating Seniors. As I previously shared, we currently do not have specific details, but are moving forward to plan events to celebrate and recognize our graduates. We are very interested in input from the students and will be looking to the class officers for their assistance. At this time, I can share that Mrs. Brickley is moving forward to prepare our traditional senior class video montage and will be in touch with students shortly to start collecting favorite photos. I think it is important that we do not rush to make decisions and give ourselves the time to see where we might be come June when most of our activities typically occur. Perhaps I am being foolishly optimistic, but maybe we will have more options if we give it some time. In the meantime, we will start discussing back-up plans.

Closing Plea

So this is the part where I make my plea to you to hang in there with us until May 22nd, have your child participate to the best of their ability in the assigned activities, and understand that we are doing the best that we can as educators. As an educator with more than 30 years of experience, I do know that your child will be better for participating. Their regression will be smaller, their ability to settle back into a normal school routine next August will be easier, and their skills that they bring to next school year will be stronger. I do not suppose to know or understand what each family faces in these uncertain times, and I respect that you need to decide what is best for you and your family. It is not our intent to make the situation worse but rather to make sure your child continues to be the best possible student. Our staff has been directed to be flexible, to accept less than what is normally expected, and to reward participation and effort over accuracy and completion.

Take care!
Michelle Dutrow
Superintendent