March 23, 2020

Dear Hopkins Families:

We hope you are healthy, and adjusting as well as possible to what may become our collective new normal. We think about members of our community who may have fallen ill, are isolated, or struggling during this difficult time. Please know we have resources to help - therefore, do not hesitate to reach out.

It’s been a few days since we’ve sent a district-wide family communication. We know you’ve heard frequently from your student’s school. We never want to overwhelm you with multiple communications, yet we want to remain in close contact and be sure you are provided with accurate, updated information on key topics related to the COVID-19 related context we find ourselves in.

Here are some important updates for you:

**Distance Learning:** If in-person school is not back in session, Distance Learning for Hopkins will begin on April 6. The practice of Distance Learning is not new, but scaling a comprehensive E-12+ learning system for 7,000 students during a global pandemic is unprecedented. However, our present challenge is also an unprecedented opportunity: How might we transform how we activate and inspire anytime + anywhere learning in Hopkins? Our digital learning coaches, library media specialists, teachers, and administrators, have worked around-the-clock to develop digital learning parameters. Because we know that strong relationships with teachers positively impact learning, the primary focus of week one of District Learning for E-12+ teachers will focus on reestablishing relationships with students and building partnership with caregivers. We will share more detailed information this Friday, March 27.

**Learning At Home:** Although Distance Learning has not officially begun, Hopkins teachers have created a number of enrichment activities to keep students engaged in learning. These materials can be accessed here. Our technology team has pulled together a number of resources for families who do not have consistent access to the Internet. Please see this document for more information.
Spring Break Meals - Order in Advance Required: Hopkins Public Schools is committed to supporting our families during the uncertainty of the COVID-19 pandemic. One of the most critical ways we can serve is by providing our children with meals during the school closure -- including during spring break. During the week of spring break (March 30 - April 3), **Hopkins will offer free school meals to all children 18 and under.** Meals during spring break will be offered in bulk and must be ordered in advance. Each child will receive one bag with enough food for five breakfasts and five lunches. Meals can be picked up at any of our six elementary schools on Monday, March 30 from 10 a.m. to 12 p.m. Please note, after Distance Learning begins on April 6, we will continue to provide free meals for students who qualify for Free and Reduced Lunch and potential fee-based meals to other students who have an interest. If your employment status or financial situation has been impacted by COVID-19, we strongly encourage you to apply for meal benefits today. You can apply online. If you are already participating in the Free and Reduced Lunch Program, you do not need to re-apply. Please check the website for any new updates.

Child Care: Childcare for children ages 4-12 will be available to families who meet Minnesota’s emergency guidelines and also for Hopkins Public Schools staff who are required to physically report to work. **This option is now open for spring break Monday, March 30 - Friday, April 3.** Registration is open now and will close Thursday, March 26 at 10:00 a.m. If you are working in these fields and are in need of childcare, please fill out this form. We hope to extend child care options to more families should school need to be closed longer. Stay tuned for details.

Outreach Taskforce: We are grateful for the robust, long-standing partnerships in our school community that have supported our families well before the current pandemic. In the context of COVID-19 we recognize that needs are increasing, and are overwhelmed by the outpouring of support from those wanting to help. The Hopkins COVID-19 Community Outreach/ Support Taskforce is setting up systems to help further connect families to resources, as well as mobilize a volunteer pool of staff, parents, and community members -- many thanks to those who have already started to help! If you would like to be added to the volunteer database, please contact Dominique Pierre-Toussaint or Holly Magdanz. If your family is in need of support, school counselors and social workers are able to help and can be contacted by email (preferred) or voicemail. We encourage all families to check out our new resource hub: The Loop: Hopkins District and Community Resources.

Stress/Anxiety: The COVID-19 global pandemic is an unprecedented challenge, which can cause increased worry, stress, anxiety, and confusion for students and adults alike. Hopkins Public Schools would like to support parents and caregivers with the following resources:

- Tips for helping your kids cope during the outbreak
- General family tips for coping during the outbreak
- Tips for talking to your kids about COVID-19
- Parent/ Caregiver Guide to helping families cope during the outbreak (by age group)
- An example daily schedule to adapt (elementary focused)
2020-21 Budget: On March 20, the Hopkins School Board conducted a workshop followed by a Board meeting, facilitated remotely due to the COVID-19 Pandemic. The main purpose of the workshop was for the Board to consider a set of budget reduction recommendations to begin to right-size the budget for the 2020-21 school year as proposed by district leaders. As we have shared previously, Hopkins is one of many Minnesota school districts facing budget shortfalls due to chronic underfunding by the state.

We received an overwhelming amount of feedback and suggestions from staff and parents. Please know we listened carefully to your feedback, and we care about being fiscally responsible. Our proposal minimizes classroom and people impact, protects mental health and socioemotional health resources and learning supports, and protects special education services.

While we still intend to transform as we make reductions, many of you asked us to slow down the restructuring process to take more time to study, listen, and work with professionals currently serving in those roles, as well as principals, classroom teachers and parents to collectively determine what transformed programming might look like. We have heeded that advice. You will see very limited restructuring implications in the reduction list. We will use the 20-21 school year to collaboratively design a more cohesive coaching model as well as a new model for personalizing rigorous instruction, enrichment, and acceleration opportunities accessible to all students. It is our fiscal responsibility to look ahead more than one year and work collaboratively with all of you to determine our budget path for the 21-22 school year as we prepare to transform our system toward increased alignment with Vision 2031. We will be in touch with you about that soon.

Thank you and be well!

Dr. Rhoda Mhiripiri-Reed, Superintendent