



## SCHOOL DISTRICT OF THE CHATHAMS

### Office of the Superintendent

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Dear Parent,

I hope that you and your families are well. I am writing to update you on a variety of items as we now enter the final month of the school year.

#### Food Assistance

The school district continues to be grateful to everyone who has come forward to assist families in need. I am again including a flyer attached to this email from the folks at Helping Hands, who are coordinating the distribution of food to any families in need. In addition, members of the Chatham Borough Council have connected with Gargulio Produce and Boxcar to provide fresh produce to families who need it. This will begin at 11:00 am on May 20 in the Chatham United Methodist church parking lot. Finally, there is an outdoor Pop-Up Food Pantry of non-perishable items in the front of the Chatham United Methodist Church sanctuary, located at 460 Main Street in Chatham, directly across from the CVS. It is open 24 hours a day for people to “Give what they can. Take what they need. Care for each other.”

We hope that the above resources are helpful to our community at this time.

#### Duration of School Closure

As you are aware, Governor Murphy has closed all public schools in the state through June 30. The Board of Education amended the school calendar last night to reflect this fact. The unused snow days from this year will be applied to the end of the school year so that the final day of school will be **June 15**.

#### Year-End Processes

I have been in discussions with the principals of our schools and our local health departments to determine the safest and most efficient way for families to retrieve personal belongings (currently in nurses' offices, desks, cubbies, lockers, locker rooms, etc.) from the schools and for the school district to collect district-issued items from students (books, Chromebooks, uniforms, etc.). We expect to finalize these plans and communicate them to you in the coming weeks, but they will be much more time-consuming than usual. We are targeting the final week of school (June 8 - June 12) for the bulk of this process because in many cases, once we collect this property from students, it will be more difficult or even impossible for students to continue with remote learning in the same way. To account for the

challenges we will have once we initiate this process, we are aiming to plan for special events and other year-end activities to take place that week. These events will take place virtually.

#### High School Graduation and Other Events

The State issued communication this weekend that calls on school districts to plan for only virtual graduation and other year-end events. The high school administration has been planning for this potentiality, and the plan is to hold a virtual graduation ceremony on June 15. At the same time, the school district administration and Board of Education are committed to doing anything possible to hold an in-person event. We are planning for an in-person ceremony after the school year ends, which we will then execute if/when conditions change and we are permitted to do so.

#### School District Athletic Fields

School district athletic fields are now open for “passive” recreational use. This means that the school district encourages residents to utilize these open spaces for walking, jogging, running, etc., but that organized sporting events are prohibited. We ask all residents to follow social distancing protocols when using these spaces.

#### Extended School Year and Summer Programs

The State has issued no guidance yet about summer programs, except that we must make preparations for a virtual Extended School Year (ESY refers to summer programming for certain special education students). We are preparing to hold ESY in this manner and we will make an announcement about all other summer programs that take place in our schools as soon as we have more information from the State.

#### Next Year

As we normally would at this time of the year, we have been preparing for our next school year. We are building master schedules, hiring for vacant positions, and making adjustments to our facilities. At the same time, it is possible that there will be significant changes to the operation of school in the fall. The American Academy of Pediatrics released an update on the [reopening of schools](#), and the Maryland Department of Education also published a [reopening plan](#). I have no crystal ball and I do not know what the specific parameters will be in New Jersey to open schools, but I am sharing these documents because they provide ideas and a conceptual framework for how schools might be different. It is worth reviewing them so that potential changes are less surprising if they occur.

I again wish you the best down this most unusual homestretch.

Sincerely,

*Michael LaSusa*

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