



PINE GROVE AREA SCHOOL DISTRICT

Promoting Growth, Achievement, Success, and Direction for ALL Children!



*Heath W. Renninger
Superintendent*

Dear Parent or Guardian,

We continue to navigate the continued challenges associated with the social distancing that is meant to mitigate the spread of COVID-19. It is still our direction and we hope that we return to school on Monday, March 30, 2020. However, all families should be prepared in case the Governor extends the current closure.

As of March 16, 2020, all activities hosted by the Pine Grove Area School District were suspended indefinitely, including all extracurricular activities. I will continue to communicate with you as the scenario evolves and most certainly as we begin easing ourselves back into full swing once the Governor gives the “all clear”. In the interim, please see the information below about what the District is doing to support families and the community.

Flexible Learning: Currently, the District is unable to acquire approval for an offering of Flexible Learning, by the Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE). PDE must approve every school districts plan because of a Federal Statute commonly called “FAPE” (Free and Appropriate Public Education) that guarantees equal access and programming for all learners. While the majority of our teachers are ready, capable, and eager to go to a flexible environment, we have challenges remaining which include: 1) limited internet access by some learners in the district; 2) limited technological devices in families across our district; 3) fully accommodating our students with special needs and; 4) figuring out how our specials teachers can teach effectively without the “hands on” experience. The Pennsylvania Statute is emphatic about FAPE. Once we have these issues worked-out and if some relief is provided by the Federal Department of Education through PDE, we believe we are inching ever closer to being able to offer this type of experience.

Online Learning Resources: At this point some teachers may have provided “resources” for students during this extended school closure. These resources will not be graded or counted as extra credit. There truly is no teacher expectation for students to utilize these resources because of FAPE. At this point, any activities or resources provided are enrichment and engagement in nature.

Food Distribution: The district was able to establish food distribution over the past weekend due to our school board committing to the program through the entire two week closure. While we have made application to the PDE for a waiver, it is much more complicated than it really should be, and the stranglehold of politics is real. However, due to full school board commitment we were able to begin distributing food yesterday. As of this letter we have passed out 632 student lunches. Distribution sites are: North End Volunteer Fire Company, Pine Grove & Tremont Borough Building, Tremont. We are providing a lunch for any child. Please note that our school board may only be able to remain committed to this program for a short duration of time.

Contact with Buildings: Per the President’s and Governor’s direction we are operating a minimal skeletal crew here, which will continue to decrease daily. Administrators will be in and out of the buildings periodically. Office voice mail boxes will be checked once in the morning, and once in the afternoon. All District-wide communication will be placed on the District website & District Facebook page. Any urgent messages will be sent via voice mass telephone messenger from the Superintendent’s office.

The situation is evolving rapidly. As Superintendent, I am attempting to do my best to balance our response with the many needs and variables associated with these decisions. I continue to receive regular updates from our professional organizations, colleagues, the CDC, Pennsylvania Department of Health and PDE.

In closing, I encourage everyone to practice safe habits, social distancing, and continue to be kind and respectful of others.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "H. W. Renninger", with a stylized flourish at the end.

Heath W. Renninger

Superintendent of Schools