

Eastport-South Manor Central School District

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April 10, 2020

Dear ESM Families,

I hope this letter finds you and your loved ones healthy and safe. It is difficult to believe that our schools have already been closed to our students for the past four weeks. It certainly has been very strange not having our students and staff here in the buildings and on campus during this stretch of time.

You may have heard that earlier this week, due to the coronavirus pandemic, Governor Cuomo announced that he extended the closures of all NYS schools until April 29, 2020. The [Executive Order](#) that Governor Cuomo issued to implement his latest directive regarding school closures states "...all schools shall remain closed through April 29, 2020, at which time the continued closure shall be **re-evaluated**." Accordingly, schools will be **closed on Wednesday, April 29** and would **reopen on Thursday, April 30**, assuming no extension of the closure period. This is different from the two previous orders which provided for schools to reopen on Wednesday in each case. As a result, distance learning in our District will continue until that date. Please refer to our website, <https://www.esmonline.org/> and "click" on the *Families and Community* tab for the latest updates on our Distance Learning Plan.

By now, everyone should have received (in the form of a letter from Mr. Frankel dated 4/8/20) what we are calling Phase II of our Distance Learning Plan for students. I want to take this opportunity to thank our teachers and administrators for all of the thought, energy and work which they have already put in, and will continue, to design and support our new platform of on-line instruction. The amount of tireless effort and drive to develop what we believe is best for our students, in order to move forward with their education during this unprecedented time, has been commendable.

I know that our building Principals have sent letters to review student on-line "Netiquette." This is basically our behavioral expectations for the students as they participate in the virtual classroom. I ask that you please take the time to review these expectations with your children once again on Monday morning. Modeling is often an effective strategy to use while instructing students. As we move into Phase II of our Distance Learning Plan, I would be remiss if I did not also request that you model this "Netiquette" for your children as they participate. With this in mind, **please know that we consider capturing another student or faculty member's image prohibited conduct by anyone in the household**. This style of teaching is a new experience for all of us and in order for it to be successful, there needs to be a level of trust between everyone that is participating. I want to make it properly understood that if we become aware that trust has been broken, by either capturing images or commenting inappropriately on Social Media platforms about anything going on in the classroom, we will unfortunately need to remove a student from participating in the virtual classroom experience. I seek your support and understanding of the importance of developing the on-line trust which is imperative for our educational plan to succeed for all of the students.

Together We Build Excellence

I would like to thank all of our families and students for supporting learning at home. It is certainly a challenging task and requires all of our students to take on more responsibilities for their education. Our teachers are very proud of their efforts. I want to encourage everyone to continue reaching out to your classroom teachers and principals for support.

Our Instructional Technology (IT) Department has been working very hard serving to form the backbone, technological portion of our plan. Please know that on the *Families and Community* page of our website, you may access our Technical Assistance Form should you need their help. Our IT team has already assisted many families with troubleshooting, logins and connectivity. I would like to publicly “tip my cap” to the performance of our IT team over the past few weeks.

I would also like to remind you that the New York State Board of Regents has cancelled all NYS Regent Exams for this year. Please expect additional information which will be forthcoming on how this may impact our 8th – 12th grade students. NYS has already cancelled all other NYS tests such as the Grade 3-8 exams, English as a New Language exams, and the Alternative assessments.

Mental health, along with everything else, is a challenge for all of us right now; but especially for our children. In addition to family, students rely on their friends for support, comfort, joy and camaraderie. Social distancing makes this difficult. If you have any concerns about your child’s mental health, please reach out to your school psychologist, counselor or building principal for support.

Next Week is Spirit Week!
Please encourage your children to participate.

We can all stay strong with ESM together!
Have a great weekend!

Sincerely,


Joseph A. Steimel
Superintendent of Schools