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March 17, 2020

RE: Letter #8 – Update on COVID-19, Remote Learning and More

Dear Parents/Guardians:

Happy St. Patrick's day to you from all of us here at Chester Academy – *May your troubles be less and your blessings be more. And nothing but happiness come through your door.*

I've been thinking seriously about the words I use in my communications with you. I want to start this letter with thank you – thank you for the support and words of encouragement that we have heard from so many of you. These messages inspire us and mean more than you know. This is an unprecedented and difficult time for all of us, as we make decisions in our daily lives and for our loved ones, friends, and colleagues. We appreciate your patience and support as we manage this and try to meet the needs and expectations of our educational community.

The Chester School Board met in a posted and statutorily authorized emergency meeting last evening to discuss and authorize the Superintendent to take appropriate action as needed to address Governor Sununu's directive to close public schools in NH through April 3rd. I was able to provide them with a report on the status of a variety of things including: preparations for Remote Learning; limiting access to the building to authorized individuals only; cancellation of all field trips through April 30th (including Washington, DC and Science Camp); plans to provide opportunities for youngsters to sign out Chromebooks; and a change in date for releasing Report Cards and Individual Education Plan Progress Reports. In addition, the Board accepted the resignation of Vice Chair Michael Romick, based upon Board policy, and appointed Ms. Dana Theokas to complete the vacated term. This action was necessitated by the postponement of Chester Town Meeting. Dana will become official once she is sworn into office by the Robert Grimm, School District Clerk.

Remote Learning will begin on Thursday, March 19th. Our staff has been working diligently to prepare assignments, develop supporting documentation and instructions for all of our students. We will open access to those assignments on Thursday at 9 AM. Our teachers will be available on email to support you from 9 AM to 2:30 PM on each Remote Learning day. At the present time we know that remote learning will take place through Friday, April 3rd.

The Chester Academy and SAU #82 buildings are closed. There will be no public access without specific authorization. My leadership team is here working daily. We are using appropriate social distancing practices. Our custodial staff continues to deep clean the building following best practices shared with us from the NH DHHS and utilizing EPA approved products that meet the CDC guidelines for addressing the COVID—19 virus.

During this period of disruption, it is critical that students and their families, as well as school staff, stay home as much as possible. If you leave your home, it is essential to strictly follow social distancing guidelines by avoiding crowds, canceling social gatherings, and maintaining a safe separation of at least 6 feet from others. Restricting access to school buildings will have

little impact on maintaining public health if these best practices are not followed in good faith by everyone.

We have cancelled the March 25th Workshop Day for teachers and paraprofessionals. This is due to the CDC guidance on not allowing large gatherings of individuals. That day will now be a Remote Learning day for students and staff.

We have cancelled all field trips through April 30th in alignment with the directive from the Governor. We are working with Bright Spark and with Natures Classroom to get the best possible refund. More specific information will be shared with the parents of students signed up for these trips as it becomes available.

Earlier today we pushed out a Chromebook Sign-Out Form to parents. We are receiving a good number of responses. If you haven't had a chance to respond yet, here is the link to the Chromebook sign-out form. <https://forms.gle/KQxPjiECEETSpJGA>

Report Cards will not be available on Friday. We have moved the release of the Report Cards until Monday, March 23rd. The statewide Individual Education Program (IEP) software program is currently not up and running. Therefore, this will delay IEP Progress Reports until a future date.

We recognize that your children may need a textbook, workbook or some other materials in order to complete the work that our staff is assigning. We have asked teachers by grade level teams to provide us with a list of those necessary items. While we have not yet developed a final plan to gather and safely distribute those things to you, we are working on it. More information will come to you as it is developed.

We are finalizing a plan to offer breakfast and bagged lunches to our students. You will receive more information on that process in the very near future.

On our website (www.sau82.org or www.chesteracademy.org) we have created a COVID-19 page which can be accessed in the quick links. My letters as well as other resources may be found there including a page for info on who to contact for specific information during the Remote Learning period. You may also find it by clicking [here](#).

Rest assured, our team is working around the clock and will continue to do so as we respond to this rapidly evolving situation. It is in moments like this when the spirit and strength of the Chester Academy staff shines, and I want to express my heartfelt gratitude for their hard work and unwavering dedication. I'm so proud of the way everyone has rallied around each other in ways big and small.

Please know that we are thinking of all of you and truly appreciate your flexibility and support. We are unwavering in our dedication and commitment to educating the children of Chester.

Sincerely,

Darrell J. Lockwood

Darrell J. Lockwood, Ed.D.