

May 22, 2020

Hello GFB Families:

As we move into the final week of May, school districts around the Commonwealth continue to look for direction and guidance in planning for summer and fall programming. Earlier this week the Governor described his phased approach to resuming usual and necessary activities. Because all elements of his plan will be responsive to data received on controlling the covid-19 virus, timelines and protocols for loosening restrictions is uncertain. In addition and as of this writing, the Commissioner of Education has not given specific direction for protocols we should plan for in September.

Students and families are significantly impacted by this uncertainty and perhaps to a larger degree than many at the State level appreciate. With that in mind, some decisions need to be made even in the absence of definite information so families can plan for the summer months. Financial considerations, potential vacation considerations and engagement for students are just a few things that families are thinking about and need to plan for now. With the calendar pages turning and after careful consideration of safety, timing and the unknown, a few plans have been determined.

I have made the very difficult decision to not offer Camp Fort this summer. The uncertainty of when and to what extent guidelines for social gatherings will be loosened as well as the likelihood that the school buildings may be undergoing some modifications in response to the virus this summer create too many logistical challenges for me to plan and execute this program. Many know how hard I worked to create this program and how proud I was that it became so popular for families and beneficial to students. This is a disappointing and personally devastating outcome of the circumstances that continue to punish us all. I am committed to running it next summer and am looking forward to it already.

Specifics regarding Kindergarten registration, PK lottery and classroom placement are being finalized. This year an on-line pre-registration process is being implemented for Kindergarten. Families will be asked to complete all forms and assemble all required documentation prior to being scheduled for an in-person registration appointment. Once guidance on social distancing and small group gatherings is better defined, we will be able to establish a timeline for this process. Families of incoming Kindergarten students are advised to check our school website regularly for updates.

We are in the process of gathering students' belongings and preparing to return them to parents/guardians. Items from students' cubbies, desks, medication, and artwork will all be bagged and marked with student's names. A specific and carefully designed plan for returning student materials that accounts for the health and safety of all is being developed. The timing of distributing these items is uncertain as I want to be sure that any items that have the potential to be useful over the summer are also included. More information on the plan and logistics will follow.

Like our families, administrators and teachers are anxious to receive specific information so we can plan for the fall. There are a variety of scenarios of how learning may look next year, all of which depend on protocols and guidelines issued by federal and state agencies. Blended learning, staggering schedules and delaying the start of the year are a few of the more commonly discussed approaches within the field...as of now. None of them have been officially adopted or formally discussed by our administrative team. Precautionary measures that will be considered mandatory pre-requisites to opening must be known before we can begin planning.

This weekend includes Memorial Day, a holiday that has tremendous historical and civic relevance. Your student will hopefully recall the significance of the pledge and how important it was to recite it as a school family and in a respectful manner. We often discussed how our flag is a symbol that stands for all the military people who have fought and/or died so we can enjoy freedoms that many others around the globe may not. Given the origin and meaningfulness of this holiday, please dedicate at least a few minutes to discuss the important sacrifices hundreds of thousands of military men/women have made so we can enjoy what most of us take for granted, our many freedoms.

There is nothing more important than preparing your students for future success and unfortunately, right now so much of that is in the hands of parents/guardians/caregivers. Please do your part by ensuring students are taking full advantage of the structured daily learning activities. With the tools our teachers are working so hard to give you, we hope you are building a structure for learning that is varied and promotes endurance. Making sure your child is engaging in daily academic thinking and learning is valuable beyond measure.

Your Partner in Education,
Mrs. Pearson, Principal