

April 27, 2020

Hello GFB Families,

This week the uncertainty of if students are going to return to school was replaced by the uncertainty of what the remainder of this school year might look like. The Commissioner of Education has described four phases to the educational planning process in response to this extended closure. Phase 3, where we currently are, includes updates to the remote learning plan with an eye towards planning for the remainder of the year. Longer term planning, phase 4, will focus on re-opening school. While we await further direction from the Dept. of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE), I encourage families to keep the following in mind:

- Given the varying resources available in homes and the approach in which our students are accustomed to learning the combination of hands on, on-line and experiential learning will continue. This allows teachers to more easily differentiate work and allows students variety in their approach to learning. Varying the learning experiences of students leads to better engagement with content.
- Regardless of how the Commissioner defines the remote learning expectations for students, it is unrealistic for families to think that they do not have a responsibility to assist students in learning. Many of our students do not have enough experience with technology to be able to independently use the device and access our learning platforms. As importantly, students at our grade levels most often require some sort of clarification to support learning. Limitations in reading abilities, understanding directions and following multi-step directions are a given for our students in early elementary grades. This of course also makes a strong case for varied learning experiences as well as guided assistance.

We are anxious for DESE to identify the most crucial skills for students to acquire prior to leaving their current grade level. As soon as that happens, likely this week, we will be ready to begin work on mapping out our approach for the remainder of the school year.

Plans for accessing student belongings, registration for next year's programs (PK, K) and summer opportunities have yet to be addressed. (Families needing medications being held by the school nurse however are encouraged to reach out to me directly.) Our focus right now is on students maintaining daily engagement in learning. With that in mind, if your family is unable to access learning opportunities as a result of not having technology, please be sure to let me know.

Hopefully by now all families have completed the census. The census is an extremely important tool that assists the government in allocating funds to communities. These funds are based on population and can translate to meaningful assistance for communities. Winthrop is a small community with no industry and very limited commercial revenue. Federal funding for schools, food programs, hospitals and roads are determined by census data. Need and allocation of funds are prioritized by population. By completing the census, you improve Winthrop's potential to receive a fair allocation.

I have thought long and hard about what must be going through the minds of our students. So much has been taken away so suddenly: relationships, routine, surroundings, and friendships. When the world is safe for us to restart and we redefine our “normal”, the world will look different and so will people. These are difficult and scary concepts for young children, but they certainly can’t be ignored. Allow your child’s curiosity to guide the depth of your conversations. There may be a temptation to shield students from this reality but that is not advisable. We never want students to believe that it’s usual for those things most important in our lives to be lost for no reason and with no warning. We want students to understand that things happen for a reason; there is a very real reason why they (and we) have lost so much. These links [When Can I Go Back to School](#) and [Wearing A Mask](#) may be helpful as you contemplate re-introducing your child to what our community may look like as we inch back to one another, hopefully in the near future. Here’s a [black and white version of Wearing a Mask](#) in case you would like to print it out for your student to color.

There are enormous challenges that lay at our feet and lie ahead and there has never been a better or more important time for you to partner with us. Let’s take a deep breath, together, find optimism, together, and support your child’s learning, together.

Your partner in education,
Ms. Pearson, Principal