April 22, 2020

An Open Letter to the Hastings Community

Hello Friends, Family, and Acquaintances of The Hastings Area School System!

Like many of you, we are eagerly awaiting the days when words and phrases like, “Social Distancing,” “Pandemic,” and “Quarantine” crawl back under the rocks from which they came from some six weeks ago. We are excited to hear kids hollering and playing in our playgrounds, parks, and other social areas; in short, we are more than ready to be back to “normal.” While opinions certainly vary as to when that day will come, it is important for all of us to realize - and to share with our kids - that it will be here one day, sooner than later. This is a temporary delay in our lives. It is a time to help each other and extend grace to our friends, family, and neighbors who are stressed and anxious about changes in their day to day lives, livelihoods, and lifestyles. It is also a great time for some personal growth and reflection, and oddly enough, thanks.

There are so many people and services to be thankful for during this crisis...the teachers who are learning on the fly to teach remotely, support staff who have helped contact families, food service employees who have braved challenging circumstances to continue to feed the community, and school administrators who have designed off-site plans to address the education of ALL of our students. We are grateful for all of their work.

We are also very, very grateful for our incredibly generous, supportive, and understanding community. Parents and students have been incredibly patient and understanding during this ever-changing time of many variables and unknowns. We have had parents, businesses, and community members volunteer to help deliver food to families, pass out school supplies, and check in on members of our community who may be in ill-health or who are simply lonely. Challenges can break or strengthen a community. I am proud and grateful to be a part of a community in which the best has been brought out in all of us. Let’s continue to model a positive, supportive community for our children. If we all do our part, we can come out of this stronger than ever.

We hope this communication finds you well and that it provides you with SOME clarity moving forward.

What can I do to help my child during this crisis?

● Establish as much of a routine as possible for schoolwork, meals, relaxation and playtime.
● Encourage your child to read, write, and get some exercise daily.
● Check in on your child’s mental health. Simply ask how they are doing, how they are feeling, or if they would like to talk to somebody (resources are at the end of this communication)
• Keep lines of communication open and have honest discussion about the effects of this challenge. Admitting to your child that you might be struggling with this, too, is helpful and may help “normalize” their own feelings.
• Encourage “virtual social times” (yes, coming from the guy who banned cell phones!); socializing online is better than not socializing at all (this should be monitored, obviously, depending on age/maturity).
• Take care of yourself. You cannot take care of a child if you are not “okay” yourself. If you are struggling, reach out to a friend, family member, member of the clergy, or a professional. As the saying goes, “it is okay to not be okay.” This is always true, but it is especially true right now.

What about Kindergarten Registration and school enrollment/registration?
If you still need to register your child for Kindergarten (or Young Kindergarten), please simply email Kelly Tobias at kelly.tobias@hassk12.org or Matt Goebel at matt.goebel@hassk12.org and provide your address. We will mail you all of the appropriate documents and get the process rolling. You may also call 269-945-6130 to enroll or register any child.

Kindergarten screening will take place in August (assuming we are back to relative normalcy), including hearing and vision screening. This pandemic should most definitely NOT take away from the excitement of any student starting school.

What about our Seniors and graduation?
Our seniors and their families have been “robbed” by this pandemic. They have missed out on musical performances, athletics, recognition ceremonies, and countless other traditions many of us remember when we were finishing up our K-12 schooling. We WILL hold a graduation ceremony for The Class of 2020. We are not ready to publish a date yet, but when we have more clarity about the safety and feasibility of holding a public graduation ceremony, that date will be communicated. Contingency plans for awards ceremonies, both athletic and academic, will be made, again, when we have a better grasp of the length of the “Stay at Home” orders. We will not let The Class of 2020 become the “forgotten” class of Hastings High School. Seniors, there is a “surprise” coming for you on May 1st. Stay tuned.

What resources are available if I need help or have questions or problems?
If you have questions about your child’s academic progress, academic resources, or how to get schoolwork/supplies, please contact your child’s teacher directly, either via email or phone. If you have trouble, please contact your child’s building principal.

Central Elementary  269.948.4423  Sarah Geukes  sarah.geukes@hassk12.org
Northeastern Elementary  269.948.4421  Eric Heide  eric.heide@hassk12.org
Southeastern Elementary  269.948.4419  Dana Stein  dana.stein@hassk12.org
Star School  269.948.4442  Amy Smelker  amy.smelker@hassk12.org
Hastings Middle School  269.948.4404  Beth Stevens  beth.stevens@hassk12.org
Hastings High School  269.948.4409  Teresa Heide  teresa.heide@hassk12.org
Hasting Virtual Academy  269.945.6167  Steve Hoke  steve.hoke@hassk12.org

Mental Health/Other Supports:
Barry County Community Mental Health  (269) 948.8041
Cherry Health Barry County Health Center  (269) 945.4220
Pine Rest  (800) 678.5500
MDDHHS Mental Health Warmline (888) 733.7753
For help with food, rent, utilities, please call 2-1-1 or
Barry County United Way (269) 945.4010

You can also email for help to saxonhelp@hask12.org

Thank you and stay safe! It is a GREAT day to be a Saxon!

Daniel Remenap  
Daniel Remenap, Superintendent  
Hastings Area School System