



March 17, 2020

Dear Hamburg Central School District Families,

As you know all Erie County school districts will be closed until April 20, 2020. The purpose of this communication is to provide you with more details regarding our Continuity of Services plan to support students and families during this period of extended school closure.

It is important for you to know that this plan, while thoughtfully developed, represents our initial thinking about a set of circumstances for which there is no preexisting template. As the circumstances change, certain elements of this plan will also necessarily change.

Our Continuity of Services Plan comprises four key elements:

- Engage students each day in thinking that requires them to “create, care, solve and discover”
- Engage each day with our students for whom the school is a primary source of mental and emotional health support
- Provide breakfast and lunch to students who qualify for Free and Reduced Price Lunch
- Clean and sanitize our school buildings in preparation for the return of students and staff to school

Engaging Students in Thinking

The vast majority of our educators have developed the capacity to engage with students and families using technology (Remind, Google Classroom, etc.) through the regular course of their work with students. Those few who have not have been instructed to develop that capacity by the close of business Monday. This is important because our educators will absolutely remain a positive presence in each student's life despite our physical separation during this period of extended school closing. In the Hamburg Central School District, our [Strategic Plan](#) drives the learning activities in each classroom. Our Vision Statement says that we “educate modern thinkers who create, care, solve and discover”, and our Mission Statement requires that we engage “all students in learning experiences that inspire lifelong learning and empower each for their future.” It is in this spirit that we will continue to offer learning experiences for students.

Here is how we'll do it:

- Each day, each of our educators will engage with their students by providing a meaningful activity that stimulates their intellect and curiosity according to the commitments in Strategic Priority One of our [Strategic Plan](#).
- Educators will use Google Classroom, Remind, or one of the other tools supported by the district.

- The vast majority of our educators have moved away from classroom learning based on printed "packets" because it is difficult to promote modern learning in that way. We have no intention of reintroducing the overuse of printed instructional materials under these circumstances, so please don't expect the district to send things like this home for your children to use.
- Any work product created as a result of an activity or a response to a prompt will be for the sole purpose of promoting creative and critical thinking, and not to assign grades.

Most importantly, each educator is an expert in their respective grade level, content area, and most importantly, in the needs of their students. We will rely on them to determine how to best engage our students' intellect and curiosity while we are apart from them.

Emergency Student Meal Distribution

The Hamburg Central School District has many students and families in need. We have developed a plan to prepare and distribute breakfast and lunch to them for each of the days that we are closed due to COVID19. Every family has already been contacted by our Food Service Department regarding the specific plans for distribution. Distribution will begin on Wednesday, March 18th.

Mental and Emotional Health

The administrators and mental health professionals (counselors, social workers and psychologists) in each school have developed a plan to stay in frequent contact with those students for whom the school is an essential link to mental and emotional health supports. The purpose is to assure that we remain a positive force in their lives and to direct them, or their families, to community-based services should their need for support require it.

We also see dozens of students and families each year in our Family Support Center, and we have a plan to continue to touch base with those families who are currently on our Family Support Center caseload.

Cleaning

Once our staff leave our schools today, all schools will be closed to everyone except the staff assigned there to clean. Every school will be deep cleaned and sanitized, and locked down. No one will have access to our schools until we enact our re-entry plan once schools are cleared to open.

This plan represents our best initial thinking based on what we know about the current circumstances. We also recognize that there are many things for which we don't currently have answers. We don't know about the status of the 3 – 8 NYS Assessments. We don't know if the state will still require Regents Exams, and, if they do, will they be written to accommodate the current circumstances. Families of seniors are understandably wondering about graduation. I will communicate with families as soon as the answers to these, and to other questions that remain unanswered, become more clear.

It is also important to recognize that there are things that will arise, that we could never have expected, to which will have to quickly and effectively adapt.

This past September, I talked to our entire staff about the fact that the modern world is increasingly dominated by VUCA – volatility, uncertainty, complexity and ambiguity. This current health crisis represents all of those things . . . and then some. The point that I made at the time was that nearly everything in the modern world, especially our work on behalf of children, requires that we work closely together with our partners. The Hamburg School Family is strong and resilient. We will all need to rely on each other, as partners, to help our community, and its children, recover from the effects of this current public health crisis once it abates.

All of our educators and administrators will be checking email daily, so please reach out to us if you feel that we can assist you in any way.

Be well.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Michael Cornell". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Michael R. Cornell
Superintendent of Schools