



Hamburg Central School District

Office of the Superintendent of Schools

Administration Building

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March 30, 2020

Dear Hamburg Central School District Families,

I hope this letter finds you well. The purpose of this letter is to offer some encouragement to everyone and to update you on a few topics that are likely of interest to most of our families.

Most importantly, I want to say thank you for being amazing partners in the learning of your children. We know it's not easy. This enterprise requires coordination of devices, dedication of time, monitoring of screen time, and, maybe, refreshing your memory of the rules of long division and the causes of the Civil War. Remember that the purpose of the learning that we are offering is to encourage our students to engage in thinking that requires them to create, care, solve and discover. Remember, we aren't grading any of this work. We are learning for the sake of learning.

My advice to you when it comes to supporting remote learning is simple. Do what's practical for you to do according to your circumstances without allowing it to become something that unnecessarily adds more stress to an already stressful time. Also, communicate directly with your child's teachers regarding how your child is experiencing the learning that is being offered. Our teachers are working really hard to establish a routine and balance around remote learning, and your feedback to them will help them as they continue to refine their approach.

I wanted to offer a quick note about live streamed learning applications like Zoom. We have come to understand that many of these applications are easily infiltrated by people outside of our learning community, which puts children at risk. Those who seek to infiltrate these applications can also gain access to the devices that are connected to the application, putting the personally identifiable information of the user at risk. For these reasons, we are encouraging our teachers to accomplish their learning goals using one of the many other applications that we have made available to them. While I find it really annoying to have to shift away from certain live video instruction using these applications for these reasons, it is the right thing to do.

As you know, the U.S. Department of Education has cancelled the 3-8 Assessments across the country, including in New York State. This is very good news for many reasons. I know many of you with high school students are wondering about Regents Exams, but we continue to wait for guidance from the New York State Education Department on that topic. High school students in Advanced Placement courses, or in dual enrollment classes with one of our higher education partners, have heard directly from their teachers regarding how exams and coursework will be adjusted to accommodate the particular requirements of each.

For students in middle school and in high school, we have decided to keep the 3rd quarter open until we return to regular session. We will assess the time left in the school year once we return and make a determination about a transition to the 4th quarter and then into final exams. We believe that this is the fairest way to accommodate the learning needs of all students.

Please know that we are continuing to offer food distribution on Monday and Wednesday afternoons for any school district family who may be experiencing food insecurity. Please use this [link](#) to sign up.

Students are prohibited from congregating in groups on any school property. As you know, the purpose of the current public health policies around social distancing is to limit the opportunities for people to be together. It saddens me to keep our students, friends and neighbors from gathering around our schools because, during happier times, they are the very hubs of our community. Individual use of our outdoor spaces continues to be permitted, but it is unsafe for them to be places for people to gather.

Finally, we know that everything about this situation is unsettling for everyone. Dianna, Jake and I feel exactly the same way. The Hamburg Central School District has always placed an emphasis on supporting the mental and emotional wellbeing of our students and families. To that end, we have established a link on our website which has a variety of [resources](#) that may assist you, or your child, if you are experiencing emotional challenges as we continue to navigate this difficult time together. Please also reach out to your school's principal if you feel that we can help link you to community-based resources.

I will continue to communicate with you as the circumstances require. Stay safe and be well.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Michael Cornell". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized "M" and "C".

Michael R. Cornell
Superintendent of Schools