



March 27, 2020

Dear Tiger Families,

First, let me start by thanking each and every one of you for all of the hard work, understanding, and support you have provided to all levels of our school family. I have seen you sharing ideas with each other, families helping other families in need, and sharing the spirit and love that keeps us centered in our homes. It has continued to warm my heart to see our family be so united and strong during this time.

As we all have been seeing, the school family is truly so much more than academics. We help center our families around things that make life feel normal and supportive. We work together to help meet all the needs of our children through and with their parents. We will continue to do that throughout this current situation and well after. What we all need right now is to feel hopeful, to feel connected, to have a little bit of normalcy in our day, and find a sense of purpose in our life. School does all of that for our teachers, it does that for our children, and it does that for us as parents. Especially, while we all may be feeling a bit lost in what to even do right now, the loss of structure and control in knowing what each day holds is tough to manage for the youngest and the oldest of us.

Rest assured, we are here for you and with you in this. I'll be the first to say, we do not have all the answers and it seems every time I find one, the path changes, but we continue moving forward. I, along with our entire team, are so appreciative of the support and compliments we've received from you and we will continue to work through each new day. As developments arise, I will continue to communicate with you like I have, including some current updates for you to follow.

RETURN TO SCHOOL

At this point, the Governor has extended the return date to school to April 14th. I suspect through the legislative discussions I've had, that date will be extended further. What it means at this very moment is that while we have continued and will continue doing distance learning at Tipton Academy, that all of our teachers and students will have their spring break the week of April 6-11th. That means there will be no assignments or lessons provided during that time. Everyone has earned that break from our unregularly scheduled school days.☺ Your child's teacher or support staff may still reach out to connect with students, but we have no requirements for academic learning assigned during that time.

MEAL SERVICE

Because many of our families depend on meal services, we have planned to continue with meal service during the week of spring break. It will continue as it has: Monday pick-up is from 9:30-11:30am and includes breakfast and lunch for 3 days, whereas Wednesday pick up is from 9:30-11:30am and includes breakfast and lunch for 4 days. Please follow the directions on the meal service announcements for the safety of our staff and families. We will continue to provide meals for as long as we can have enough healthy staff or volunteers to provide it. We keep very high precautions in place to ensure that this can continue for the duration of the need. We are very thankful to the staff that have committed to work and

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volunteer during this time as well as to CJ's Catering and Food Service for being able to accommodate the needs of our families.

DISTANCE LEARNING

There have been many discussions about whether the academic time we are putting in will "count" for schools, meaning the instructional hours required by the Michigan Department of Education (MDE). The MDE had urged us to plan for the possibility of extended closures and to prepare for distance learning. We did just that. Other schools either didn't plan as we did or were unprepared logistically to provide the level of distance learning that we did. For various reasons, not all school districts are providing the same level of distance learning as we are and even some are not doing any at all. We, at Tipton, are providing the continuity in education that we were told to do as well as doing what is right for the students that we serve. We will continue to do this because it is what is right for our school community. I think it's important to note, that in many other states distance learning is being used the same way we are using it despite school buildings being closed now and through the rest of the school year for them. The Governor has said that in terms of credit, grades, and even graduation of senior level students, distance learning does count. It is important that your children are participating in the work, lessons, and support offered from their teachers and support staff. What this also means for us, is that if we have a family that is struggling with the way in which we are providing support, they should reach out to their teacher and let them know. We will do our very best to get your child's needs met. Whether that's through checking out technology, scheduling more virtual face- to-face time, phone calls, or other ways. I have been extremely proud of our team's interaction with our students! The virtual lessons and planning they are doing is so inspiring during this time! Please make sure to thank your child's teacher and support staff for being awesome!☺

SUPPORT

We realize that right now the most important focus is for everyone to feel connected and supported. In addition to your child's teacher, we have our awesome emotional support team and admin team available as well. Please don't hesitate to let us know if you need their assistance.

We recognize this time, although challenging, has had some positive benefits such as providing more family time. We hope that you are able to have some good, quality time with your family whether over the dinner table, going for a walk, participating in some of the community activities such as bear hunts, shamrock walks, playing board games together, and good old-fashioned bedtime story time. Even if you are just watching our March is Reading month mystery reader videos together each night, it is something you are connecting with together.

Our hope is that our distance learning is not only helping your students to grow developmentally while we are outside of the school building, but that it is keeping the importance of learning alive in your homes during a time when other things feel uncertain. Additionally, we hope that it is helping your child to see that we as schools and families are true partners in helping them learn and grow into happy, successful adults someday.

If I could offer this to you, please find time to laugh together! Laughter heals in more ways than many people realize and when you see Dr. Lackey wearing a tiger head, Mrs. Orlando delivering "Meals on Wheels" in her wheelchair, Ms. C in a hot dog costume delivering the

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daily announcements, kids posting pictures of participation in spirit week, or our little kindergartener Layla creating her own morning announcements, take those moments and laugh! It is not only okay during such a stressful time, laughter is needed and it helps us all heal from the trauma that our lives are in right now.

WHAT NEXT

The question many people are asking is, "Where do we go from here?" Unfortunately, I do not have all the answers yet; but at Tipton, we are moving forward and we will make adjustments as we need to. With your support and communication, we will continue to provide the love, support, guidance and distance learning that we have been to our students, staff, and families. I will update you as information comes or at minimum on Friday of each week. If we have any confirmed cases in our school, we will be notifying you.

Therefore, it is extremely important that if you or a member of your household are being tested for the COVID 19 virus that you contact Dr. Lackey, Mrs. Orlando, or myself through DOJO, EMAIL, or Calling the school phone number as soon as possible.

THANK YOU

Lastly, I just want to say THANK YOU again to our parents and families for all of your support and compliments during this time. I also want to say THANK YOU again to all of our amazing teachers, leaders, support staff and meal service team for your continued drive to providing all we can to our students. Without you, we would be truly lost! Finally, I'd like to say THANK YOU to all of the dedicated frontline Tiger parents and family members that are nurses, doctors, and medical personnel helping to fight for the lives of those that are battling right now. We recognize that you are struggling too, and if you need anything additional during this time, please don't hesitate to reach out and let me or anyone on our team know you need something. To each and every one of our Tiger family members, YOU ARE ENOUGH! YOU ARE SEEN! YOU ARE THOUGHT OF! YOU ARE IMPORTANT! AND YOU MATTER IN OUR LIVES!

We are in this together! Sending hugs and love to our entire Tiger family!

Thank you,



Mrs. Angela Gilbert
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