



West Orange Public Schools
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Superintendent of Schools

J. Scott Cascone, Ed. D.

May 29, 2020

Dear West Orange Families,

I hope this finds you all well. Next week, we will enter the month of June and the homestretch of this extraordinary school year. I'm sure that you all share my relief that we have been able to weather the storm together and complete the year in as successful fashion as possible. However, I would also ask you to join me in celebrating a year in which the district saw many successes and triumphs in which your children made great advances on their path to completing their current academic year, even as we may lament the manner in which the school year concluded.

At the same time I would suggest that we may be filled with the some level of satisfaction and happiness not only for the sense of completion and accomplishment of the academic year, but also anticipation of catching our breath and regrouping over the summer months. No question, this summer recess will look and feel different than summers in the past. However, with the current trajectory of the virus in so far as infection rates and fatalities, there is much hope that over the course of the next three months the situation will improve substantially and allow us to return in September with some normality.

Even in the absence of clear guidelines on what protocol we will need to follow for September, we have begun some high-level planning in this regard. Starting in June, we will be assembling various district and school level steering committees and task forces to begin the hard work of thinking and planning for September. Please rest assured that the parent perspective and voice will be an integral part of this process.

However, there is still much work to do this year to ensure that we are closing it out in a smooth and successful manner as possible. I know that there are a number of key items which are in the minds of our parents and students. Namely, precisely how any end-of-the-year celebrations and or graduations will be taking place, the manner by which students will be able to claim personal effects from the schools, as well as the process by which students will drop off any school property which they may have in their possession. Further, as we close out the academic year, parents may very well have questions with regard to how we are going to finalize our assessment and grading processes.

Over the course of the last several weeks, I have been working directly with the building principals on a daily basis to plan these various procedures. You can expect that, next week, if they haven't already, building principals will be communicating directly with their parent communities to provide you with specific information regarding, for example, days and times for any end of year ceremonies, as well as the procedures for pick-up of personal property and drop off school property.

Furthermore, Mrs. De Mendez, our Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum Instruction, will be releasing a comprehensive communication to parents regarding report cards and the like.

Concerning our summer programs: the Extended School Year (ESY) program and the West Orange High School credit recovery programs - STEP UP and Summer Institute - have been modified to be delivered in an on-line learning platform. Moving forward with this measure of certainty allows the programs to continue without hesitation or reliance on restoration of social norms. Unfortunately, due to existing social distancing guidelines and the need to make a final decision at this point, the Summer Enrichment program has been cancelled. We look forward to offering this engaging program for our students in years to come.

Lastly, as a reminder, classes will be conducted on June 2nd since voting for Primary elections has been cancelled. Our last day for school is therefore moved to Friday, June 19th, and in keeping with tradition, the day will follow an early dismissal schedule.

I thought it were important to have this touch point with the parent community today in advance of the weekend, as my sense is these are topics which are weighing heavily on your mind and to let you know that there will be a substantial and detailed amount of communication with the coming weeks. So again, as we have strived to do throughout this crisis, let's focus on the positives of the tremendous sense of accomplishment, not only for having successfully weathered the closures, but also for having successfully completed another school year in our children's lives. I wish you a restful weekend and continued good health.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "J. Scott Cascone". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

J. Scott Cascone, Ed. D.
Superintendent of Schools