

March 17, 2020

Dear New Paltz Parents and Guardians:

On March 10th – when the prospect of a school closure changed from a possibility to a certainty -- I sent a memo to all New Paltz teachers. I wrote:

*I am broaching the question of what can be done --- given our human and technological resources -- to “maintain continuity of operations” in the event of school closures aimed at mitigating a viral spread.*

*The details of “What can be done?” will depend on several factors including closure length, grade level, content area, and access to digital platforms. Nonetheless, I anticipate that events will require that we immediately engage some general questions such as:*

- *How might K-5 teachers “keep learning alive” during a school closure through prescribed activities and experiences that nurture student curiosity, imagination and developmental growth?*
- *How might 6-12 teachers -- across the respective content areas --- “preload” subject- relevant assignments, projects, and explorations that maintain students on their paths toward graduation?*

When we closed our schools on March 13<sup>th</sup>, we lost the face-to-face interaction between teachers and students that was our foremost “platform” for creating

learning. We did not have available a ready-built, equally powerful alternative that could support the daily routines and methods upon which we relied.

That aside, “though much is taken, much abides” -- or more directly, there’s no use worrying about what we can’t do. Now we must be imaginative about what we can do to keep kids connected to learning.

Four days after closure, we are at the beginning of what will no doubt be an uneven, non-uniform process. Certain teachers at various grade levels are more accustomed than others in using remote learning technology to keep their students “on track.” Realistic expectations need to be developed and disseminated to all teachers to guide their practice in the coming weeks. Certain students need to be equipped to access the technology that is readily available to their peers. New webpages need to be designed that will link families to web-based resources. Those resources need to be identified and vetted. These are only some of the considerations that we are weaving together.

Behind the scene of what individual teachers already may be doing on their own initiative, we are using this time to create shared, alternative means of “keeping learning alive.”

You soon can expect to see the results of that work.

Sincerely,

*Bernard Josefsberg*