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April 6, 2020

Dear Lincolnville School Committee and Community,

We are now heading into our fourth week of remote learning today. It has been incredible to see how the staff has stepped up to redesign learning and provide support through meals and communication with all of our students and their families. The feedback we have received from families has been hugely positive, especially regarding help with food and the flexibility with learning. We understand that families are stressed right now financially and anxious about the future. Our children are wired to learn and explore and will be able to readily catch up once we are able to once again provide classroom instruction in our schools.

I have been meeting regularly with the Commissioner of Education, the other regional superintendents as well as the other presidents of the regional superintendents across the state, the Department of Education and our principals. Everyone is saying that they are working harder than ever to continue to try to provide needed services and stay connected through this challenge. The financial impact of this shutdown concerns all of us as well, wondering how it will impact our continued services in the future. We are all in this together, however, and will work through this together as a local community, state, nation, and beyond.

We have decided to keep our April break, to allow everyone some time to recharge. This is a break from our remote learning routines, but meals will still be provided for that week. We are hoping for a decision from the Governor as to whether we will be able to return to school this year. The superintendents really want this to be a statewide decision rather than left to individual districts.

Again, please know that our intentions for the fall, if we are not able to return this year, are to continue learning where we left off. Students will not be retained and teachers statewide will be working to determine how best to catch our children up to where they need to be as soon as possible.

Please continue to take care and be kind to yourselves and those around you. The news today is starting to sound a bit more encouraging. We will get through this!

Sincerely,

Dianne Helprin

Discussion topics with regional superintendents, Commissioner Makin and the DOE:

DOE's role. Where do we want guidance and where do we want local control?

- Decision on when or if to return to classroom based instruction

How to manage special education requirements?

- Right now since we are not providing 'new' learning for any student, we are not required to meet the special education legal requirements in individual education plans

Connectivity for all students?

- Recent 'offerings' have been contracts in disguise

Paying employees?

- Right now we are mandated to pay all school employees (all are considered essential) to keep the unemployment stream open for others and to try to stabilize the economy. We are also asked to continue to pay all contracted services and vendors as budgeted as long as they continue to pay their employees

CARES Act

- Each district should be receiving money to help with compensatory education projects, such as addressing the learning gap and providing technology connectivity for students. This is not to reduce budgets in general. It is to address concerns created by the lack of classroom instruction in schools.
- The amount will be approximately 80% of Title 1 funds. Our schools currently get about \$20,000-\$30,000 each for Title 1, so \$16,000-24,000.

Food Services

- This has been very confusing as to whether you would get reimbursed if providing meals to all students, but has since been resolved. All meals will be reimbursed. Meals will still be provided in all schools over April break.
- The Commissioner and DOE are going to look into another method of providing meals in the long run. Is our current method sustainable? It was to be an interim plan.
- Should we look at food banks or providing groceries rather than individual meals?

Budget process (LD 1267)

- The Commissioner is telling us to go ahead and budget the amount we were given for subsidy. Some were hearing that this amount would now be cut with the economic fallout.

- May town meetings uncertain at this time. Looking into whether we can just go with referendums or hold electronically. If budgets are unable to pass, the prior year's budget goes into effect.

Public meetings (LD 2167)

- Meetings may now be conducted through telephone, video, or other similar means as long as the public may attend and notice is given as to how to do that. School committee members must be able to hear and speak and roll call votes taken. Public must be able to hear and participate (email members of committee?)