



April 14, 2020

Dear Marion County School Family,

We hope you and your family are well as you read this letter. We would like to say thank you Marion County School District family for being so flexible and resilient during these trying times. We appreciate your kindness and compassion! For that, we are so grateful. We love our students, and we miss them immensely.

***At 2:30 p.m. today, Governor Tate Reeves issued an executive order that extends school closure for all schools in the state of Mississippi through the remainder of this semester.*** The Governor's executive order means that for the remainder of the 2019-2020 school year classes in Marion County School District will not occur in a traditional school environment that brings large numbers of students and staff together in one location.

We understand the hardship that school closure places on our families, as well as the social and emotional impact it may have on our students. It is important for you to understand that while buildings are closed and school will look different, learning will continue in MCSD. Our goal is to provide continuous educational opportunities and practice for students while schools are closed, but also, we desire to eliminate as much stress as feasibly possible for students, parents, and teachers. While it is our responsibility to continue to educate our children, we also want to compassionately take into consideration the variety of difficulties that our families and employees are enduring during this time.

We certainly understand that schedules and routines have been disrupted, and we have all literally had to make a paradigm shift in our day-to-day thinking and operations. As I have stated in a previous letter, all 1<sup>st</sup> round distance learning packets have been distributed, and our online resources are available through your child's Clever portal found on our MCSD website. The purpose of the digital work and/or paper packets is to provide students with educational opportunities to keep their skills sharp while the schools are closed.

We would like to say thank you, parents, for working with your children on the packets and on-line resources. You have always been your child's number one teacher while during the school day our educators are their teachers and serve as in loco parentis in your absence. Preserving a continuity of learning for our students during this closure is extremely important, and I must say that you along with our educators have handled this so well and have done a great job nurturing one another through this. Human connection is just as critical as instructional time right now, and with that educators and parents should let themselves off the hook a little bit, since these are unprecedented times and no one can be expected to handle it perfectly. Again, you have done a great job! We appreciate your positive attitude and ability to remain flexible.

We have a great team in MCSD who has worked hard to prepare our resources. Our second packet of work will be forthcoming. We will send out a detailed schedule to let you know



when the packets will be available for pick up. We have made some adjustments to dates and times so the lines will not be as lengthy as the 1<sup>st</sup> packet pick up. Again, it has been very rewarding to work with you. You have been very concerned and have done your best to ensure your children continue to learn. Please remember to complete this work at your own discretion. Remember, our teachers are working from home but are excited to help you and are available during the regular work day to assist you and your children through your regular communications methods.

We also realize that this announcement raises a lot of questions for you regarding grades, promotion/retention, graduation, etc. It does for our MCS D team too. Our district leaders have been working together over the past week, and will continue to do so, in order to work out answers to all of your questions. We have met to discuss our policies in regards to the policies that MDE suspended. We have been working hard to be able to provide you with answers, but could not do so until we heard from the Governor today to determine if school would ultimately be closed through the semester. Our students are always our number one priority, and we appreciate your patience as we work through our policy adjustments. We want to make sure any policy changes demonstrate our commitment to serving students and families during these challenging times. Our ultimate goal is to enact policies that err on the side of the individual students.

As you know, our district-wide theme this school year has been based on Jon Gordan's book, *The Hard Hat*. Although we have had a construction theme this school year, there is no absolute blueprint on how to handle this type of situation, but we will do our best to adjust our present blueprint. We want to live up to our yearly motto, WD>WS, WELL DONE is greater than WELL SAID.

WELL DONE, friends! We will keep our "WE BEFORE ME" hard hats on along with our construction vests and continue to work together in these upcoming weeks to ensure great decisions are made in the best interest of our students.

**WE ARE MARION COUNTY! WE INSPIRE EXCELLENCE!**

Please stay safe! If you have any questions, please submit them through the Q&A link on our COVID-19 page <http://www.marionk12.org/covid19/>, and we will be glad to send you our best answer.

Sincerely,

Wendy Bracey  
Superintendent