

# *Southmoreland School District*



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*"High Quality Learning for All"*

March 24, 2020

Dear Southmoreland School District Families:

The world is currently seeing firsthand the dangers and impacts of the coronavirus. Due to this pandemic, our nation and state are now facing unprecedented challenges. As your superintendent, I recognize that Pennsylvania's shutdown of schools and non-life-sustaining businesses is impacting our collective community and each of you individually. I hope this time has provided the opportunity to identify what is most important in our lives and has afforded everyone the ability to spend quality time with our families and loved ones.

Currently, schools can reopen for staff on April 7th and 8th with the idea of potentially resuming classes on April 9th. This is not definitive at this time and could be impacted by a resurgence of COVID-19 cases. Therefore, families should still be prepared for an extended shutdown period. There have been many questions pertaining to Southmoreland School District's Continuity of Education Strategy now that Pennsylvania's school shutdown has been extended another two weeks. Please know that we are taking direction from the Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE) and their directives may change due to the fluidity of the crisis. Additionally, we only have minimal essential personnel present in our buildings and almost all of the employees will be working remotely.

As a district, our staff has been working to develop educational opportunities and systems that support the social, emotional, physical, and educational needs of all students, while acknowledging and addressing the personal challenges that you may be facing in your family and work lives. Throughout the shutdown, teams of Southmoreland School District administrators, teachers, and support staff have been meeting remotely to create a Continuity of Education Strategy that involves distance learning for all students.

Due to these efforts and the work that will continue this week, the Southmoreland School District is prepared to execute our Continuity of Education Strategy for our students, teachers, and families beginning on March 30, 2020, through the time it is deemed safe for our students and staff to return to our schools. Below is a list of items that should be noted in preparation for distance learning. Please take the time to read this entire list and follow-through with any recommendations.

As educators, we are aware of the many challenges ahead as we implement an approach to learning that is new for many teachers, students, and families. Therefore, I encourage ALL of us to practice patience and work collaboratively to educate our students. I am confident that our community will rally together and work to the best of our ability to navigate these uncharted waters.

Sincerely,

Vincent Mascia, Superintendent

## **Southmoreland School District Continuity of Education Strategy**

### **Family Notes**

- Southmoreland administrators and technology leaders will be conducting accelerated online professional development for our teachers beginning on March 25th. The support staff will receive formalized training for distance learning on March 25th, March 26th, and March 27th. Our staff will be ready for the first day of non-traditional instruction on March 30, 2020.
- Families that do not have access to enough technology (computers) to support their children's learning or adequate internet service completed a survey last week. If you missed this survey or now feel that your student needs a device(s) to support their distance learning or internet access, please contact your building principal via email. If attaining these services is deemed impossible due to where your home is located, the district will make all efforts to make alternative arrangements.
- Students will not physically report to school but will receive attendance credit if they engage in and complete teacher-directed learning activities. Please watch for specific instructions from your principal(s) or teachers on how to connect to Google Classroom, Zoom, and other online learning tools. At this time, students should not worry about retrieving instructional items from their school lockers/desks. If this changes in the future, the District will communicate with families.
- The District expects that all students will complete their learning activities and assignments as if they were in school. Because we are counting Continuity of Education Strategy days toward our days of instruction, students should expect to engage in rigorous work. However, teachers recognize and will account for the fact that many parents are working remotely and are not able to provide constant support for their children's educational programming.
- An online tutorial will be available for parents and students to assist them in logging into the Google Education tools and how to operate each of the respective tools. Please refer to the Southmoreland School District Web Page for instructions as to how to use these tools. Additionally, the technology staff and support personnel will be available to help those families or students experiencing technical difficulties.
- Students with Individualized Education Plans (IEPs) that attend in-district programs will receive specially-designed instruction from their teachers. Special education teachers will review current programming with families, and communicate a plan to provide special education services in the distance learning environment. Each student's special education teachers/case manager will communicate regularly with their families. Special Education teachers, special education assistants, and other staff will be available online to provide individualized intervention and support services. Special education teachers will provide instructions on how to access these services.
- Students with an IEP attending an out of district program(s) will receive personal communications from the Southmoreland School District Special Education Department next

week to discuss their child's specialized program and steps moving forward to continue to provide services to your child. Every effort will be made to ensure that your child receives the services outlined in their IEP.

- AFTER March 27, 2020, we encourage families and students to visit their teachers' Google Classroom for their schoolwork and also to communicate with their teacher(s). Our teachers will need time to prepare their lessons and we trust you will grant them the time to do so.
- We appreciate in advance the necessity for our parents to take a more active role in the teaching and learning process. While we recognize it may become challenging at times, our teachers and staff will work to assist you to the greatest degree possible. Our teachers will be available during the instructional day via Google Classroom, Zoom, or email.
- The Pennsylvania Secretary of Education has canceled all state assessments for the 2019-2020 school year.