ATHENS AREA SCHOOL DISTRICT

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"Building Foundations for Future Success."

CRAIG STAGE, SUPERINTENDENT BRENDON HITCHCOCK, BUSINESS MANAGER

Greetings Parents, Guardians and Students,

I wish to thank you for being patient and supportive these past two weeks as we implemented continuous learning activities for our students. We recognize that this is a difficult time period for many of our families as we all navigate social distancing, business and school closures, and the associated challenges of COVID-19. In the midst of crisis, we have come together as a community to digest the unthinkable ramifications of a global pandemic and support each other during this unprecedented event. My communication to you today is a request to ask you to partner with us in trying to help our children return to a sense of routine and normalcy in the midst of the chaos that is surrounding us.

Governor Wolf announced on March 23, 2020, that Pennsylvania Public Schools will remain closed through April 6, 2020. Our tentative plan is for students to return to school on Monday, April 13th. However, there is a possibility that schools could close for the remainder of the school year. In the meantime, we plan to provide continuity of education through remote learning. Should schools remain closed for a longer time, the learning plan described below will ensure that we can provide continuity of instruction.

Therefore, beginning on April 1, 2020, we will begin a phased plan for all Athens Area School District students to begin required remote instruction, where learning continues through an online format, when applicable. Elementary students will complete their online learning through the Odysseyware website, and students in grades 6-12 will complete their online learning through Edgenuity with exceptions for a few high school courses already engaged in online learning through different formats.

Our plan is to transition from what we are currently doing, which has been offering non-mandatory learning activities, to planned instruction. This will include required engagement and formal teaching that is similar to what occurs in a classroom setting while students learn new concepts that are aligned to grade level standards. In order to receive grades and credit, students must engage regularly and complete the course requirements. Attendance will be taken.

Remote Learning Starting Timeline:

April 1, 2020--High School students begin remote learning

April 6, 2020--K-8 students begin remote learning

Student Technology:

You will be able to pick up your child's school-issued device if you do not already have one at home. Homeroom teachers will contact you to find out if you need to pick up a device. Devices will be available for pick-up at the following times:

Athens Area High School: April 1 from 12:00-4:00 p.m.

Harlan Rowe Middle School: April 1 from 12:00-4:00 p.m.

Lynch-Bustin Elem. School: April 2 from 12:00-3:00 p.m.

K - 12:00-12:30

1 - 12:30-1:00 2 - 1:00-1:30

3 - 1:30-2:00

4 - 2:00-2:30

5 - 2:30-3:00

SRU Elementary School: April 3 from 12:00 - 4:00 p.m.

3-5 - 12:00-2:00 p.m. K-2 - 2:00-4:00 p.m.

If you are unable to pick-up a needed device at these times, contact your building principal to arrange a pick-up. Those picking up devices must remain in their cars and will receive devices through the car window to limit exposure.

No Home Internet Access:

For those with no home internet access, the following options are available.

- Contact internet providers that are listed at the end of this letter. Many are offering free service during school closure.
- Utilize the school Wi-Fi from the comfort of your car in the school parking lot.
- Request printed materials for online courses from your building office.

As our administrators, educators and students begin this initiative on Monday, we ask for your support. We know that there will be some bumps as we transition our instructional delivery means and methods and we ask for your patience and flexibility. That is to be expected with any new initiative, even when we have had many months to prepare, let alone only two weeks!

We are confident in our plan and in our educators' abilities to communicate with your children remotely, but this is a change in how we "do school". The past two weeks allowed our students to engage in review material, but going forward, their remote learning assignments will become mandatory. Along the way, the district will support all staff with tools, resources, and workshops designed to enhance teaching and learning during the school closure period.

Remote Learning will require your support from home as well, and we thank you in advance for your help and patience. We know that many of you may also be working from home, or that your circumstances may be changing in a variety of ways, and we recognize that this will not be easy for anyone. There will be challenges and we all must be willing to be flexible and adapt to a rapidly changing environment. However, we all want this to work in order to continue to keep everyone healthy and to continue to deliver the best possible education to the children in the Athens Area School District. We are proud of the work that we do and our ability as a community and district to work together in times of need. There is no greater time to teach our children how to

share, be patient, work on time management skills and problem solve. Admittedly, this is easier said than done, especially with our little ones.

We envision our start dates to look and feel like the first day of school in a new venue. Initially, remote instruction may feel a little uncomfortable as our teachers and students settle into a new routine, but it will be done with the best intentions for all Athens Area students. We are committed to continuity of learning and specific interventions for every student. Our mission is to focus on learning for all students. It will not come without challenges, but it will be filled with care. There will be a learning curve, but it will get easier over time. Please be patient with your child's teacher and other school personnel. I have the utmost confidence that they will be doing their absolute best to help foster learning in this new setting.

The next two weeks, April 1 - April 10, will be used to orient everyone to the new Athens Area Remote Learning format. The initial goal is for your student to feel connected and engaged. Some new learning may take place, and completion/effort grades only will occur. Teachers will provide a lot of feedback, so students understand expectations and get used to the remote learning environment. Our goal is to remain flexible during this critical time as we know that the stress and anxiety regarding the pandemic and all of its domino effects are affecting Athens Area families in many different ways.

Attendance

Students will receive a weekly attendance mark. Students will be marked present if they complete online or paper (if no internet access) work that week. If a student does not complete any work during a week, they will receive an unexcused absence for the week and parents will receive a phone call about the absence.

Structure at Home

We know how hard it is to maintain a sense of discipline when schedules change. Therefore, it will be important to establish that structure as soon as possible. Some guidelines that we recommend include:

- Identify a space, such as a dining room table, that could become the study space. It is beneficial to make this space different from a bedroom or other location with distractions.
- Develop a structured schedule for school work (e.g., 8:00 11:00 a.m. and 1:00 3:00p.m.). This structure will begin to form a routine.
- Eliminate other distractions, such as cell phones and television, from the environment.
- Take a few moments to help your child get a feel for the "week's worth" of assignments. This is a new skill. Students are not used to looking at a large batch of learning activities at one time and then developing a plan to tackle bite-sized chunks. This is an important life skill and will get easier.
- Ensure some "brain breaks" and exercise opportunities within the work times. The balance of mind and body will be especially important given the stress and anxiety of this global pandemic.
- Reinforce the importance of consistency in sleep patterns. We want to avoid "summer mode" when some students stay up very late and then "sleep until noon".
- Reach out with questions. We want students and parents to ask for help or direction if they need it. All Athens Area teachers and staff are available via email during the school day. Our website can be found here: http://www.athensasd.k12.pa.us/

Our Curriculum, Instruction and Professional Development team, along with the Technology and Student Services Departments, have worked alongside the building principals to develop the plans for this transition.

We will continue to send updates as we embark on our new journey, the Athens Area School District Remote Learning Plan. Please continue to monitor your email, SIA or social media for the most up-to-date information.

Together we will make this work.	
#WildcatPride	
Sincerely,	

Craig Stage Superintendent of Schools Athens Area School District

Internet Services:

We have identified the following vendors in our area that provide Internet Services. Many of these vendors are currently offering specials for families with students that do not currently have internet access. If you do not have access to the internet and cannot get it. We will do our best to make arrangements for you, just talk to your principal.

- PennWise Wireless
 - o Covers Ridgebury/Berwick Turnpike
 - o \$50/month for 3Mbps
 - o http://www.pennwisp.com/index.php/sales-pricing
 - o (570) 673-2020
- North Penn Access/Empire Access
 - o https://www.empireaccess.com
 - o Fiber optic Internet \$50/Month
 - o Athens/Sayre. Parts of East Smithfield/Ridgebury/Bentley Creek.
 - https://www.empireaccess.com/where-we-are/check-location
 - o Offering *FREE* Internet for students for the remainder of the school year.
 - o Call 1-844-502-7089 for more information or visit
- Spectrum Internet
 - o \$45/Month.
 - o 866-866-4959
- Beaver Valley Cable
 - o http://www.beavervalleycable.com
 - o (570) 364-5851
- · Bradford Broadband.
 - o Basic \$55/mo 3Mbps Down and 1Mbps Up
 - o (570) 364-5851