



MOUNTAINSIDE BOARD OF EDUCATION

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MRS. JANET WALLING — SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLS

June 5, 2020

Mountainside Parents and Guardians,

As we round the corner and approach the finish line of an incredibly different and difficult year, I would like to take a moment to reflect and share some information on a few areas:

1. In light of recent events around the country surrounding the disturbing death of George Floyd in Minneapolis, we know students and their families may be having conversations regarding race and equity in America and that your children may have questions about what they are seeing and hearing. These same conversations have been taking place with my administrators, school counselors, staff, and others. The Mountainside Schools remain committed to doing our part to make a difference in the lives of our students and the world through programming which facilitates the social and emotional well-being of all students and cultivating an accepting and positive school culture based on communication, respect, inclusion, and empathy. As a district we have accomplished meaningful work this year by extending staff awareness of implicit biases, broadening the implementation of SEL lessons focused on diversity and inclusion, and expanding opportunities to create equal educational opportunities for all. I feel that we have made good strides in these areas, however we all recognize there are additional aspects where we can expand and grow.

In an effort to support any conversations you may be having at home, or questions your child may have, I have attached some optional links below that you may find helpful. Additionally, our school counselors and school psychologist are available to provide you with additional resources or to speak directly with students if desired. Please reach out to them if you feel they can be helpful and know that we are here to support you all.

- [How to Talk to Your Children about Protests and Racism](#)
- [How to Talk to Kids about Racism, Protests, and Injustice](#)

2. Distance learning has definitely been challenging on many levels! This new process has taken a significant amount of adjustment for students, staff, and all of you, but it has provided us with opportunities to grow together and prove that we really are Mountainside Strong! Your dedication towards supporting the meaningful lessons created by our staff has been evident on a regular basis and greatly appreciated.

June is never an easy month for student focus in the BEST of circumstances, and I know that these next weeks will be just as challenging for them (and you), if not more! Please help us finish this year out in a way that is meaningful and memorable for all of you. Make it a priority to celebrate your child's accomplishments, create special memories together (even when we aren't together), and reinforce for them how incredibly impressed we all are with their efforts and success with learning in a way that has never been done before.

3. The future is uncertain. I honestly do not know exactly what September will look like for us at this moment. We are already developing plans for various different scenarios from a regular opening, to all virtual again, to a hybrid combination of both. Guidance from the state, the health department, and the Department of Education will shape our path and I can certainly guarantee that there will be many curves and bumps along the way. I know that the unknown can be a bit disconcerting for many of us, especially if you are a planner like me! What I can tell you is that we will keep the safety and well-being for all students and staff at the forefront of all decisions as we determine how to best re-open our schools within the parameters that come to us from the state and I will keep you updated throughout the summer as our plans become more specific.

In order to provide us with feedback on the distance learning process I will be creating a parent survey to share with you in the next week or so. I will welcome your feedback, ideas, and thoughts regarding the past 51 days (but who's counting?) as well as what you feel have been some of our greatest challenges and successes.

4. We are finalizing the process for a contactless pick-up/drop-off of student materials, books, technology and other items to take place during the week of June 15th at both Deerfield and Beechwood schools. Specific information regarding the procedures and schedules will be sent out by early next week.

As always, I am so incredibly proud to be working alongside you as we navigate these uncharted waters and I remain available to support and help you in any way that you may need.

I wish you a good weekend and hope that you continue to be safe and well,

Janet Walling
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