

May 28, 2020

Dear Mansfield Families,

It has been a few weeks since my last communication and there is much to share about what has been happening and what we know about the future. Please read on for more information.

Survey Results

Many thanks for taking the time to share your feedback with us via the survey sent earlier this month. One thing that we can all agree on – School at Home is hard! It is hard on students who don't get the same level of instruction from their teachers or the much needed time to socialize with friends. It is hard on teachers who are trying to plan instruction that meets a variety of student needs and interests while coordinating the work with teachers from multiple subjects. And, it is especially hard on parents who have their own jobs to do, most with little training to be educators, and all with the added challenges of simply running a household in these times.

We heard loud and clear that the efforts of all school staff are greatly appreciated and families recognize the many ways staff are reaching out to maintain some sense of community and connectedness. We also received good feedback and some suggestions that can help improve upon these efforts both now and in the event we find ourselves in a distance learning mode in the future.

Teachers have already responded to the feedback in a variety of ways including increasing their contacts and instruction with students via Zoom, clarifying and simplifying the weekly learning plans, and changing up the tasks to allow for more outdoor learning activities and hands-on projects. The current Tuesday to Tuesday schedule is a result of the timing when we started this work and while we know it doesn't work for everyone, we ask that you bear with us for the final weeks of school with this unconventional weekly schedule.

Ending the 2019-20 School Year

We are required by the CT State Department of Education to continue instruction until the final day of our school calendar. For Mansfield, the final day of school, accounting for the snow days we had early in the winter, is Monday, June 22. That day will be a make-up day, allowing students to complete any assignments or tasks that teachers are expecting be returned. The final full week of school will include many community building and fun activities as we wind down the academics. Schools are planning now to provide virtual celebration and closure activities such as field days and other all school events.

Plans for formal celebrations for students in grades 4 and 8 are underway and will be communicated directly by the school. Orientation programs for grade 4 students moving to MMS and grade 8 students moving to E. O. Smith High School are also in the planning stages.

Summer Programs

Each year Mansfield Public Schools provides a variety of summer programs. We continue to receive information from the State regarding protocols for summer programming. It is our intention to continue to support students this summer through multiple programs including those to support students with special needs or learning challenges. In addition, knowing that many summer camps are not operating, we are working on a virtual summer learning camp that will provide students with hands-on, exploratory, theme-based experiences supported by teachers. Much more information will be coming soon.

What about the Fall?

This is the question on everyone's mind. Public health conditions will be the determining factor with regards to when and how schools will reopen. The governor's Reopen CT Task Force has an education subcommittee and there are five area advisory teams across the state who are all working to review options, establish protocols, and gather input. In addition, we have a group of twenty staff, parents, and Board of Education members who have formed a reopening committee that is meeting twice a week for the next month to identify the needs and actions to be taken locally. It is unlikely we will have any direction from the State until the middle or end of June. It is also likely that information and plans will continue to develop throughout the summer. I will continue to provide updates as information is available.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Kelly M. Lyman".

Kelly M. Lyman