



HARBOR BEACH  
COMMUNITY SCHOOLS  
402 S 5<sup>TH</sup> ST HARBOR BEACH MI 48441 989 479 3261

March 24, 2020

Dear Parents and Students:

The biggest constant right now is that things continue to change. As most of you are well aware, Governor Whitmer announced at 11:00 a.m. on Monday, March 23, that our state is in a “Stay Home, Stay Safe” mode. As part of this order, all K-12 schools across the state must remain closed through Sunday, April 12, and may reopen Monday, April 13. Student safety, and in a broader sense community safety, is of utmost importance, and Harbor Beach Community Schools will adhere to the governor’s directives.

I understand there are likely a great number of questions you may have about what this extended closure means for your child(ren). We will continue to work to find answers as this unprecedented time unfolds. I’ll cover a few here that I’m sure most of you will be wondering about.

Will the year be extended and/or will this required COVID-19 break be extended? These two questions are certainly at least in part connected. The state legislature has not taken action on waiving any days we’ve missed. I would imagine this will be a major topic when sessions begin again tomorrow. At this moment there is no new information on that front. As far as the COVID-19 break being extended, I don’t have any “inside information.” We will plan to return on Monday, April 13, and behind the scenes we have begun discussions about what we’ll do if things are extended. I truly hope we have some definition for both of these topics as soon as possible.

It does appear that state testing will be waived for the 2019-2020 school year. State Superintendent Dr. Rice did petition U.S. Secretary of Education Betsy DeVos on March 17. He asked for Michigan to be included in her recommendation for waiving state testing. Mrs. DeVos granted Michigan the waiver for testing, and now we wait on the Michigan legislature to amend the state law that requires statewide testing. It is believed by most that this will be approved, which essentially means we will not have SAT/PSAT, M-STEP, MME, etc. in 2019-2020.

HBCS has been considering how grading for the third marking period and beyond will work. The length of time we will be away from school certainly will impact our final decision on this point. We haven’t finalized anything at this time. However, we are keenly aware of the impact of grades both now and down the road. At the high school level especially, we know grades can have a significant impact on future plans. Before any final decisions are made, we will consider all factors and make sure to be as fair as possible to all students.

I held a virtual meeting on Monday afternoon with all PreK-12 staff. I can say without a doubt the staff of HBCS misses you all. That was easy to tell. I’m proud of our staff here; they are determined to continue to provide supplemental lessons, projects, resources, and ideas for you to continue learning at home.

I said once before and I’ll say it again here, I recognize that truly strong and amazing teachers who are highly qualified in their craft are irreplaceable. You can’t replace a master teacher with a computer. The way a master teacher changes instruction through sensing an individual student’s



HARBOR BEACH  
COMMUNITY SCHOOLS  
402 S 5<sup>TH</sup> ST HARBOR BEACH MI 48441 989 479 3261

needs - by knowing how a smile for one child means I get it and it's time to move on while a smile from another student means I'm lost but I'm hiding it to save face. Master teachers can make an B+ a celebration beyond belief for one student and yet for another can make a B+ a kick in the pants (because they sense there is more for that child to give). Master teachers make students question, discover, and find in themselves levels of understanding they couldn't imagine. They don't just open the door for students to become whatever they wish to be; master teachers know how to lead students through doors the students didn't even know were there and to become something they didn't even know existed inside them. A computer can't do that. I will not lie about that point.

However, I guarantee you these same master teachers working here have vowed to work creatively and diligently through this time away to help continue student learning as best they can, and they will be successful in helping your child continue to learn. On Monday I hung up from our virtual staff meeting feeling reassured about teaching and learning at Harbor Beach Community Schools. I know this staff will never give up.

I hope to communicate with you all again when I know more and can provide you honest answers. For now please stay safe, and keep our kids safe. There's nothing more important in the world than our children.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Dr. Shawn Bishop'. The signature is written in a cursive style.

Dr. Shawn Bishop  
Superintendent