



Mission: Create a culture of deliberate excellence with equity

Vision: Every Graduate will be future ready for personal success, college and career, and the global marketplace

Gobles Public Schools

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CoVid 19 Disrupts Life As We Know It

March 23, 2020

Dear Team Gobles:

Hello everyone. Hope all is well. It is certainly unprecedented times. Everyone is on edge. This is serious now. You can say that “our call to action” has arrived. Historically, when we have faced adversity, we find a way through it. It is about taking care of ourselves and each other. It is the small things that make a big difference. It is our time to shine. We will get through this, together.

The Gobles Public Schools promises to do our part. We are implementing “Best Practices” and what so many of you are experiencing as well. Onsite, physical staffing is on an “as needed basis” for continuity of operations only. Limited staff are involved, limited hours exist for everyone, and social distancing is the expectation. Offsite staffing is also in place with many staff working from home online that routinely “check in” and are “on call” if and when needed.

At home, “All of Us” are having “Very Personal Moments” right now. Questions that are front and center in our lives include some examples like: 1. Now what? 2. How do we cope? 3. How do we make ends meet? 4.. How do we interact and communicate with loved ones in our life? 5. What about school and learning? Yes, times are very different.

In a way, this is a unifying experience, in the sense that everyone is going through it together and although everyone’s experience is a little bit different we are all listening to each other and collectively experiencing this crisis at once. One concept running through our minds these last few days to help us feel like “we got this” has been to remember the generations before us and some generations now that have gone through things, difficult things. You see, fighting is in our DNA. We are going to go through this now just like they did then but it doesn’t mean that it is going to be easy. We can and will do this though and we are going to come out stronger on the other side.

Our national and state leaders are addressing this crisis by attempting to “thread the needle” so to speak on balancing the healthcare self quarantine to mitigate and slow down community spread and flatten the curve of the virus while in the meantime intentionally shutting down parts of the economy hopefully without creating an economic collapse. Life in America with one another and our mobility has changed as we have known it to be. We are at a time where we must put the health of America and Gobles first. It will not be business as usual for individuals and systems. We all have a role to play. Everyone needs to take personal responsibility to prevent the spread of the virus. Don’t stop implementing critical practices that are going to protect us all. If we are complacent, selfish, uninformed, if we spread fear, distrust, and misinformation, this situation will last longer and more people will be hurt but if we pitch in and share the facts we can flatten the curve for the coronavirus. Again, there are everyday actions to help prevent the spread of the respiratory disease. You have heard these over and over but we will repeat: 1. Wash your hands. 2. Avoid close contact with people, especially those that are sick. 3. Avoid touching your eyes,

nose, and mouth. 4. Cover your cough or sneeze. 5. Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects with household cleaning spray. 6. Stay home, especially when you are sick. Please understand that this virus will be stopped at the local level. Regardless of how many interventions are communicated, a great deal of implementation success depends on the willingness of the public to adjust their behaviors accordingly. The spirit and cooperation of Team Gobles taking seriously the professional guidelines and precautions are something we can be proud of. Thank you for this. Let's continue to have each other's backs and beat this.

District Update (As of March 23, 2020 Subject to Change)

- School Closure: Gobles Public Schools will be closed from March 14, 2020 through April 12, 2020. This Mandatory School Closure includes all district facilities (i.e., buildings, playground, and track). Until we are instructed differently, the plan is to resume classes on April 13, 2020.
- Food Service Pick-up and Delivery Revision: Gobles Public Schools Food Service will be offering a grab-n-go breakfast and lunch starting March 18, 2020 through April 12, 2020. Meals can be picked up or scheduled for delivery. Meals are for students 18 years of age or under. Please access the link titled Food Service Revision on the District Webpage for further details.
- Update on Potential for varicella (aka chickenpox): On Wednesday, March 18, 2020, the Gobles Public Schools learned of suspected cases of varicella (aka chickenpox) at the elementary building. The District timely reported the suspected cases to the Van Buren/Cass Health Department. To date, the presence of varicella in the school building is still NOTCONFIRMED and the District remains in close contact with the Health Department. Again, we are making you aware of this situation because varicella is highly contagious and is generally accompanied by a slight fever and a rash with itchy blisters. If a staff member or student has any symptoms of varicella, please contact your doctor. Please know that the District continues to monitor this situation and is in frequent communication with the Health Department.
- Instructional Time: There are a few issues to address on this topic. 1. On March 23, 2020, the Michigan Governor extended Mandatory School Closure from March 14, 2020 to April 12, 2020. This decision does not effect the Gobles Public Schools as our calendar aligns with this change vis a vis Spring Break. Last week, the Michigan Legislature met but did not waive school districts having to make-up the Michigan Governor's original Mandatory School Closure Days. Future meetings for the Michigan Legislature are scheduled for March 25, April 1, April 8, and April 15. The Gobles Public Schools will continue to monitor the Michigan Legislature for any action on this now extended Mandatory School Closure waiver. 2. On March 20, 2020, the Michigan Superintendent of Public Instruction and Michigan Department of Education came out with direction to school districts that distance learning strategies in individual schools and districts will not be counted as official student instructional time during the Covid-19 school closure. 3. Gobles Public School's position on learning during this crisis has been informed by information from Federal and State of Michigan Governmental Entities and Agencies and Legal Counsel. Please understand that the Gobles Public Schools vision and mission as well as core purpose for being are about teaching and learning. The leadership and staff in the organization are well intentioned regarding continued engagement of our students in the learning process during this crisis. However, the logistics of doing so are beyond our capacity at this time (i.e., a vast number of our students do not have internet capabilities), and violates the social distancing guidelines set forth by the health care professionals that formed the basis for the Michigan Governor's Mandatory School Closure in the first place and today's Shelter in Place announcement (i.e., would require teachers to gather at the school to produce and grade the packets, and bus drivers delivering the packets to homes, etc). Given this, we have no choice but to follow state law and equitable access educationally, and to prioritize health and safety for our students and staff.
- End of Grading Period Adjustments: Gobles Public Schools will end marking period 3 on March 13, 2020, and begin marking period 4 on April 13, 2020. Marking period 3 was originally scheduled to end on the March 20, 2020 (a week later), and thus teachers have been instructed to make

adjustments as necessary for this change. Marking period 4 will begin two weeks later than originally planned, and thus once again the teachers have been asked to make adjustments as necessary, focusing on Essential Standards. Given this, your students educational goals for this school year are still achievable, with carefully planned adjustments to curriculum. We have also asked the teachers to be generous with students regarding this closure, to make decisions in terms of grading and grades that will most benefit the student, and if necessary, excuse work previously assigned, not yet returned, and/or incomplete.

- Testing Waivers: On March 20, 2020, the District received notification that the United States Department of Education announced a broad waiver process that will allow states to bypass all testing requirements included in the Every Student Succeeds Act for the current academic year. The Michigan Department of Education submitted their waiver request on March 20, 2020. On March 23, 2020, the Michigan Department of Education received the Federal waivers. The next step is for the Michigan Legislature to amend state law that requires statewide testing and accountability. The Reading by Grade 3 Law that takes effect this school year is tied to standardized test results and the continued implementation of this program is a matter for discussion. The Michigan Department of Education has also communicated that it is working on a contingency plan for when this waiver is granted for high school juniors to be able to still take the SAT for free. The Gobles Public Schools will continue to monitor any development on these issues at the Federal/State Level.
- Seniors and Student Progress: There are still no specifics on this issue from the Federal Government or State of Michigan. However, on Friday, March 20, 2020, we received our first bits of information on this topic. (Michigan Governor Whitmer Quotes) No one wants to see a student educationally harmed due to circumstances beyond their control. We do not know what the future will hold, but we are absolutely committed to ensuring the needs of our students, parents, and families are met as we navigate this new terrain. I will be working in the coming days to ensure our seniors graduate and that no child is held back as a result of our ability to provide face-to-face instruction during the COVID-19 school closure. (Michigan Department of Education State Superintendent of Public Instruction Dr. Michael Rice Quote) With this public health emergency growing, the legislature will need to relax Michigan Merit Curriculum high school graduation requirements and other legal requirements. The Gobles Public Schools will continue to monitor any developments on this issue at the Federal/State level. Plead be assured that we will be flexible and take into consideration the attendance policy, outstanding disciplinary measures, and Seniors preparing for graduation. Adjustments and accommodations will be made as necessary, and as stated above, we will be generous with students and make decisions that will most benefit our students.

It is true that we are in a Pandemic. These are not normal times. Our national and state leaders are navigating uncharted territory. There are many unknowns. Things can be chaotic during times like these. All of us are nervous with many questions and few answers. When decisions come, sometimes they have no directions or guidance with them. It is this environment that we find ourselves in today. With this void, we must be patient and give our leaders space. Tough decisions are ahead. We must be flexible and able to adjust as things evolve. Most important, we must use common sense.

We are now faced with a new week where we again have no way to predict what is going to happen. How many more people will contract the coronavirus? How many more will tragically pass? What will happen in our personal lives? Will there be action by the Legislature this Wednesday to forgive these Mandatory

School Closure days? Will there be another extension? And so much more. Please know that we will be transparent with you and communicate information to you as soon as possible.

Team Gobles, we are thinking of all of you during this time. Continue taking care of business, focus on your families, and stay safe and healthy. Be the calm in the storm.

Go Tigers

Jeff Rehlander-Superintendent