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March 23, 2020

Dear colleagues,

Allow me a moment to extend my appreciation for the work that our Mahwah team has put forth during Phase I of this virtual learning experience. We were confronted with a unique challenge, significantly shifting our instructional approach and extending our reach during a difficult time. I have been blown away by the work, collaboration, and commitment that continues to be shown by our dedicated Mahwah Staff. Teachers have stepped outside of their comfort zone and taken instructional risks in order to deliver innovative and meaningful learning experiences to our students.

For this, we thank you.

The goal for Phase I was to reinforce, enhance, or remediate in order to maintain the learning that has taken place prior to our initial closure. You extended that goal by creating meaningful activities that allowed our students to showcase their learning while adding the personal touch of creating moments to connect with the students via a variety of virtual platforms. Those interactions did not go unnoticed. We have been inundated with emails and correspondence from students and parents commending and applauding your efforts during this trying time.

We appreciate your continued flexibility and effort as we move to Phase II of our instruction.

### **Phase II of Instruction**

Educators are naturally focused on what is next and how we can support our students for what is to come. Although we do not have clear guidance on the duration of this closure extension, we believe that it is important to incrementally plan in order to solidify a successful instructional plan.

Phase I, lasting two weeks, into March 27, we will have focused primarily on the review of content. Knowing that this closure is for the foreseeable future, it is important that we turn the corner together, and start to gradually expose and introduce our students to new content. This will put your students in a place to effectively navigate the next stage of their educational work.

Phase II will last the week prior and after our spring break (March 30 - April 17). **Your spring break remains intact and remains a week where school is not in session.** Your building administration/supervisors will be meeting with you virtually to plan collectively, as we did prior to Phase I, to strategize on content that will be covered and digital platforms that can be used as effective teaching tools for you and your students. We recognize, too, that this shift in instruction will call for time to plan. To this end, we have worked with our administrative team to identify planning times, prior to the start of Phase II, that will be designated to prepare for this very

important transition. Scheduled planning times and expectations for instruction in Phase II will be provided to you in follow-up communication from your building administrators and department supervisors.

If you are looking for ideas and support specific to technology integration, please do not hesitate to reach out to Ruth Davis, our Supervisor of Technology Integration, and/or visit our [Mahwah Technology Integration Page](#), where you will find a host of ideas, videos, and other resources of support.

**This designated time for you to prepare in your teams will replace our originally-intended date for us to return to district in-person on March 27 to plan accordingly. Instead, there is no expectation for you (all staff members) to return to school physically for this reason, as you will continue to work remotely.**

To accomplish the tasks to prepare for Phase II of instruction, a number of teachers have reached out to see if they would be able to get materials from their classrooms. For this reason, we will be opening up the building this Tuesday-Thursday (March 24 - March 26) from 9:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m. This will allow staff members to come in, if needed, to retrieve materials that they might need to deliver instruction for Phase II.

### **Teacher Self-Care:**

The district continues to value the importance of self-care for all of us. It is our hope that you are able to find a balance between serving our students and caring for yourself during these unprecedented times.

We continue to add relevant content, specific to mindfulness practices, on the [“Need a Break”](#) page of our district website. Also, we have been sending out correspondence from Mindful Practices that contains a schedule of opportunities throughout the day that our staff and students can take part in Mindfulness, Movement & SEL Sessions. It is our hope that you are able to engage in any activity that allows for you to recharge. Your health and wellness during this time is just as important as your instructional delivery.

Please know that we will continue to share information as we receive it, and will continue to walk with you along this new journey. We thank you and appreciate all that you give to our students, and to each other. Know that your administrators are only a phone call, an e-mail, or a video-conference away to support you!

The students of Mahwah are blessed to have you as their teachers.

With gratitude,

Michael DeTuro, Ed.D.  
Director of Curriculum and Instruction