April 20, 2020

Dear Middle Level Families,

As you are aware by now, Governor Cuomo has extended our school closure through May 15th. Teachers have been working hard to adapt their instruction, assessment and grading procedures and practices in an effort to continue to support all students through this distance learning model. Given these adaptations, I feel that it is important to communicate our procedures and expectations for grading as we continue into the 4th quarter.

Third Quarter Grades:
The third quarter began January 25th and officially ended April 3rd. The students' last day of physical attendance at school was Monday, March 16th. In the time between March 17th and April 3rd, it was difficult for the District to fully determine which students were capable of accessing online learning. As a result, the middle level put 2 safety nets in place for all students for the 3rd quarter. First, while teachers continued to assign lessons and materials, there were no grades recorded from March 17th through April 3rd. This measure ensured that students who did not have digital access to materials were not penalized for that lack of connectivity. Second, no student was assigned a grade below 65 for the third quarter. In this unique environment, many students are struggling, whether it be socially/emotionally or academically. Students are learning to “do school” in a whole new way. To support an adjustment period for all students, we decided it was in the best interest of all to create a minimum marking period grade.

Fourth Marking Period:
The 4th marking period began on April 6th and ends on June 26th. Schools have worked hard since the closure to determine which students needed devices and access to online learning. We feel that those middle school students who were in need of a device from the District have received one at this time. Therefore, grading for the 4th marking period will resume in a more traditional manner. Students will be expected to complete all assignments that teachers assign, and they will be graded at the teacher’s discretion. We realize that this learning environment is still not ideal, so the safety net that will be in place for the 4th quarter will be a 2-week grace period for submission of assignments. Students who do not turn assignments in by the given due date will not be penalized for the first 2 weeks an assignment is missing. However, after 2 weeks, teachers will have the discretion of recording a zero for work that is not submitted. Grades for the 4th marking period will reflect the average that a student has earned. There will be no minimum grade for this quarter.

Final Exams:
In keeping with the State’s decision to cancel Regents exams for the 2019-2020 school year, so too will middle level cancel final exams and projects given to middle school students to close out the year.
8th grade students who are taking a course for high school credit (Living Environment, Common Core Algebra, and Spanish or French) will still earn those credits given that the student passes the course.

The middle school principals and I strongly encourage all students to engage with teachers online, to seek support when needed and to complete all work assigned. We will return to school, and it is critical that students continue to build their knowledge and skills in preparation for that return, whenever that may be.

Students and/or parents who are in need of academic, or other support should contact the teacher, school counselor or building principal for assistance. Any family that is having technical difficulties connecting with a teacher(s) should contact the building principal to resolve the issue.

Sincerely,

Amanda Caldwell
Executive Director of Middle Level Education