

Miller Place Union Free School District

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October 23, 2020

Re: Scheduled Professional Development Days and Laptop Update

Dear Miller Place Community,

As we conclude the second month of school, with no COVID-19 related closures to date, I would like to thank everyone for your partnership, transparency and efforts in keeping our students, community and staff healthy, as well as our schools open. While we've been fortunate in this regard, with an uptick in positive COVID-19 cases on Long Island, the probability is that at one point either a student, faculty member or District staff member will test positive, necessitating the closure of a class or a school building for a day or even longer. In preparation for this eventuality, the District recently amended our learning environments to ensure teachers are fully versed in the technology and protocols to efficiently conduct remote learning and to ensure our students feel comfortable in this setting. We believe these changes and the professional development days we have scheduled are critical to ensure a seamless transition to a remote platform, when the need should arise.

To accomplish this objective, we've scheduled Wednesday, October 28, for a secondary staff professional development day and Wednesday, November 4, for an elementary staff professional development day. On these days, our staff will be provided with additional Google training specific to the nuances of live streaming and the remote learning platform and how to incorporate best practices for synchronous and asynchronous instruction in a Google environment.

After announcing on Tuesday that our elementary professional development day would be November 4, we did hear some concern about the date. We realize scheduling a virtual learning day for our elementary grades may require an adult to be at home, or, if parents work and cannot arrange to be home on November 4, daycare. We understood this reality when considering the best path to take to ensure the proficiency of our elementary teachers on a fully remote platform. We also appreciate that for some families, making arrangements for an adult to be at home on that Wednesday, or arranging for daycare or other alternative care for their children on that day, may be difficult. However, we believe it is imperative to conduct this virtual training day, for teachers and students, sooner rather than later.

Parents should know that the remote learning schedule for November 4 will not be a full school day but rather two segments of student-teacher interaction and engagement. We do understand that students may need help with devices and/or assistance logging on to participate in their virtual classroom. We also know that student devices will vary—from laptops to desktops to tablets and smartphones. This is okay and expected. More specific information regarding the elementary virtual day will be provided by building principals next week.

At the secondary level, on October 28, there will be no student virtual attendance for NCRMS and MPHS students. On November 4, secondary students will attend school in a virtual setting as they have throughout September and October.

ELEMENTARY LAPTOPS DEVICES UPDATE

It is likely that you are already aware that most school districts and businesses nationwide are experiencing significant delays in ordered technology due to high demand worldwide. The elementary laptop devices that the District ordered in the spring, for August delivery, were initially delayed until October. We were advised this week that the delivery date has now been pushed back again to December 28 with a window of 30-days. Based on this information, it is possible that devices may not be delivered until January or February 2021 or they may be here next week.

We understand that this is very frustrating for students and parents, as it is for us as well. For our virtual elementary day on November 4, if your child has not yet received their school-provided laptop, we ask that you make provisions, if possible, for your child to have a laptop or tablet available for use as they did in spring 2020.

As we have said numerous times before, this school year is unlike any we have experienced before. We are all learning together and working together—in real time—to meet the challenges of educating our students within the constraints of the COVID-19 pandemic. We have made great strides, but there is still much for us to do. These professional development days are part of that effort. We thank you for your continued patience and support as we work to ensure a safe learning environment for students, staff and District personnel while educating your child in these nontraditional times.

As we enter the holiday season, usually a time for gatherings of family and friends, we ask that you remain vigilant to NYSDOH and SCDOH guidelines regarding celebrations, continue to wear masks whenever in public, practice social distancing, and wash hands often.

Stay Informed ~ Stay Safe ~ Stay Positive.

Dr. Marianne F. Cartisano
Superintendent of Schools