

Hello, Fairfax County School community, parents, students, family members.

This is Dr. Brabrand, Superintendent. It's great to be with you this afternoon. I'm going to take just a moment to make sure everybody is on this Facebook Live before I begin.

Alright. Good afternoon everyone. I'm Dr. Brabrand, Superintendent for Fairfax County Public Schools. I am also here with Sloan Presidio, our Assistant Superintendent for Instructional Services. He is, we are, practicing social distancing; he is six feet away and won't be visible through here, but if there is a question or two that I need additional counsel or assistance on I'll be glad to share his counsel with you.

I hope each and every one of you are well right now. I know it's a challenge during the COVID-19, challenging for all of us and we're in this together. We're going to continue to work with you and communicate with you.

We've been working very hard to prepare during this situation to make sure we're meeting the needs of all of our students and staff and family members. I really want to especially thank all of our staff members who've been out working and distributing meals over the last several days to families in need. It really, really is an example of our caring culture in Fairfax going above and beyond.

I also recognize the very difficult time for all of us in the situation. We remain committed to sharing with you the very latest updates as this situation develops.

So, what I'm going to do is take some of the questions that have already come in that I know are real community concerns and staff concerns and student concerns and do my best to answer them. Understanding that the situation continues to evolve and that we need to continue to adapt to the very latest information that we have.

As I said this before, we are all in this together and we will continue to work together. And do the work to the best of our ability.

Q: When will schools reopen to students?

As I previously shared, it's our plan to return to school April 14. At the same time, I need to tell you, we all know that the situation continues to evolve day by day. The latest information and developments that we receive from state and federal officials we are committed to sharing with you.

Q: I know a lot of students have been asking is, "Dr. Brabrand, what's going to happen with third quarter? Will it be extended? Are grades final?"

Please know that your grade books are not closed. We are working very hard to be sure that all assignments issued prior to schools' closure that there will be opportunity for students to complete assignments before we close the third quarter. In fact, we are providing maximum flexibility for our students to be sure they can get those assignments issued prior to the school closure completed before we close the books on third quarter.

One of the things that was being asked were questions about the SOLs and AP exams. I want to let you know that we received information from the U.S. Department of Education just this afternoon that they are allowing states to continue to have the ability to ask for a waiver. I have a call later today with the state superintendent as do other superintendents here in the Commonwealth. And we'll get additional guidance around that. But we are very happy that the federal government is providing states the opportunity for flexible waivers around this.

There are also questions about AP exams. This too is new information we received just earlier today from the College Board and it's posted on College Board's website. In fact, let me see if I can get the latest updates here.

One of the things we've learned about from the College Board is that the College Board shared today that they are not doing face-to-face exams. The College Board has shared that they are going to be working on how to provide those exams in a different format. I want you to know that the FCPS leadership is working very hard with College Board leadership on a daily basis to get that information. The testing schedule information will be available by April 3.

Another question was around the return to learn and student laptops.

I want to share with you what I shared in our letter yesterday, we are working on plans that we will announce early next week around our distance learning and around the distribution of technology for our students. Again, that information will be available early next week.

The reality is in Fairfax we have many schools with many different technology needs and profiles. As you know at our high schools, all of our students already have laptops through FCPSOn. We don't have that provision in our elementary and middle schools. Some school districts do. We will be announcing our plans early next week around the distribution of technology to students. We'll also be working to find and target families that still need Wi-Fi or internet access at home.

One of the additional questions was around prom and graduation. I understand this. Prom and graduation, as a former high school principal, I know are very important milestones for every child, and I want you to hear this from me. I'm going to do everything I can working with our high school principals to delay the decision around cancellation of proms until as late as possible.

As far as graduations, I remain committed to finding a way for all of us to have the opportunity to participate in graduation. Graduation, as you know starts in late May and June and I think, right now, we need to continue to monitor the events, but know that my commitment is to do everything we can to have a graduation exercise for our students.

Some have asked you about are we going to pay staff if schools are closed.

We are committed to working to pay our employees during this closure. I know there have been some of our employees who are substitute teachers and wanted more specific information for our substitute teachers. My approach to paying substitute teachers will be shared early next week.

One of the other questions was around teachers communicating with students again. I want to be clear teachers have had the opportunity to be able to go and communicate with students right now. What we want to work on is making sure that we were not giving new graded assignments or requirements to students. Because during this time we really don't have equitable access for all students and many of our students do not have technology access.

Let me see if there are a few other questions that we have from staff.

Q: Can we get into schools? Things we need like notebooks, or music instruments. I want you to know we're working on a plan with our principals to be able to share access to the school only for emergency or critical items. We know that that's a concern for many folks who were not able to get into school. Obviously, I know that remains a concern.

Let me see if there are any additional questions coming in that I can respond to.

Q: Are there any FCPS employees who've been diagnosed with COVID-19?

Many of you know that I shared late Saturday night that we did have one teacher at Lynbrook Elementary School who was found presumptive positive from COVID-19. We've received no additional information about any of our employees receiving such a diagnosis.

One of the things that I must say. I am glad that we did close. I made a decision late Thursday to close school and I made a decision over the weekend to close schools on Monday and when we were going to do laptop distribution, out of an abundance of caution to protect our students and staff. As we plan for laptop distribution next week, we'll make sure we follow federal, state and local health department guidelines and that we are modeling the social distancing necessary to carry out any activities necessary as a school division.

Questions about SACC centers being open?

That question will be answered by the county. I know they are working very hard to look at that situation. And I want you to know that we are working very closely with the county each and every day around our issues. So, we will have more information about SACC and the county will be sharing out. Once that decision has been made, we'll be sharing that information with you as soon as possible.

Let me see if there are other questions on here.

Q: If we move to online instruction, how are we going to help students with special needs?

A: That's a great question, one that we've received a lot of here in Fairfax County. We have a lot of students with special needs, socio-emotional needs, learning needs, and how are we going to support them during this time. I want you to know that the Department of Special Services has been working hard to develop resources in professional development for our teachers around accessibility tools and supports and working on devices for students with disabilities. We have on our website a toolbox with strategies and resources around how a student with disabilities may be able to access accommodations at home. I know there have been questions about our homebound students, and we are working to provide those services for our homebound services in a virtual manner. Those services need to continue, and we are working to do that.

Q: Someone asked whether April 13 is still planned as a teacher workday?

A: The answer is yes, it is. Again, we will continue to look at what our state and federal officials are telling us as we look at our calendar and we will share any updates once we have them.

Q: People have asked questions about summer learning.

A: Again, this is one of those situations where we are going to continue to evaluate the length of the school closure and we will determine the kind of programs, in addition to what we normally provide, we have students with additional learning needs that need to be met. In a sense we've always had something where we called it summer learning loss. The reality now is that many of our students are dealing with COVID-19 learning loss. We need to figure out how we can provide additional supports and compensatory services for those students during this time. And summer may be one of the ways that we can do it. We simply just don't have all the information yet. We don't have the length of closure yet, but we are committed to doing everything we can in an unprecedented situation, that none of us wanted, that none of wanted for any of our students, particularly our students with special needs. And we will continue our commitment to doing everything we can to going over and above to meet their needs.

Q: I've registered my student for school but haven't received confirmation. What can I do to verify that my student is enrolled for the coming year?

A: The confirmation will likely be delayed for another week, but don't worry, there is no cutoff to enroll your school in FCPS.

Q: How do I enroll my child now?

A: I would ask that you please wait until schools reopen. There is no deadline for general registration. And as soon as we are back to normal operations, or we begin distance learning, we will find ways to be sure that we get students registered and into a learning environment.

I'm going to see if there are any additional questions.

We have a lot of specific human resources questions about disability and other leave questions. So, I've asked you to email and the answers I'm sharing with you right now will be summarized and put on our website so everybody, not just those watching on Facebook Live right now, can get the latest and greatest information.

So, if you have questions about disability and leave, you can email hrconnection@fcps.edu.

Q: What about courses that are already online, such as personal finance? Can kids start them now? I do believe Dr. Presidio (offscreen) has the answers to that.

A: Online campus will resume on March 30, and personal finance will also resume on March 30. For kids that are registered to begin that course in the summer, they can start that now. For kids in that course now, or any other online course, they will resume on March 30.

Q: How are teachers going to receive distance learning training?

A: They are going to receive distance learning training in a distance learning environment. We have Instructional Services staff already working hard on a plan as I shared, that we will be sharing that early next week, we just actually had Dr. Presidio and his team meet with each of our principal associations today, elementary, middle, and high, around that distance learning plan, and we will be sharing that information with the community after we have completed our final review.

Q: How can we volunteer or donate to FCPS?

A: I know that is such an important question as this is such an extraordinary time and the generosity of our community that has already been shown. Major corporate companies in the Northern Virginia area have already reached out to me personally and to others on my team, as well as individuals, even individual students who are eager to help tutor others during the school closure. I have my staff working with all those groups. Go to our Coronavirus website at www.fcps.edu. There is information about community connections, how you can volunteer, and donate. I want to remind folks that as we look to be an engaged community, and we all want to be, we need to follow and monitor the social distance guidelines that our health department officials have provided.

Q: How can school counselors help with distance learning?

A: All of that information will be shared as part of our distance learning plan with staff. They will have a role. All of our employees, not just our teachers, will have a role in making distance learning as successful as possible. But let me be clear, distance learning is no substitute for day-to-day, face-to-face instruction with teachers and support staff.

I know that, you know that, we all know that. We need to acknowledge the reality that this is not an optimal situation for any of us here in Fairfax County Public Schools. We need to do the best we can with the hand that we have been dealt. We are committed though, to doing everything we can to provide supports for students, and make sure that the learning experience that they do have is as successful as it possibly can be.

Some of you are just joining in and we are getting a lot of questions about the school year being extended. And at this point what I shared with you previously, we have no additional decisions other than what we have already shared that we will be returning on April 14. We are making plans to provide, and I will share them early next week with the community, around how we would prepare to go into distance learning. We continue to have regular briefings with state and federal officials, and we will be committed to providing the latest updates as we get them.

I have time for just a few more questions, and in fact I have a meeting with the State Superintendent of Instruction in just a few minutes.

Q: What about spring sports?

A: I know that is a question as well, and when I made the decision to close schools until April 14 I talked to the director of our school athletics and activities programs. If we are able to return to school on April 14, we could complete the spring sports season under the current VHSL guidelines. But to be honest, it's too early to know whether we will be able to return on April 14.

As I said before about prom and graduation, I understand the importance of school activities, cocurricular and extracurricular activities, on a student's life. We are going to do everything we can, to wait as long as we can, to make decisions for these milestone experiences for our students.

Q: Are the schools being cleaned now?

A: We are continuing to do work to make sure that our custodians are in the buildings on a regular basis cleaning our schools. We did additional cleaning at Lynbrook Elementary the very next day and that school has been thoroughly cleaned by over 35 cleaning technicians to make sure that school is spic and span for when students and faculty return.

No other questions it looks like here at Facebook live. I want to thank each and every one of you. Let me know if you thought this was a positive way to engage the community and we can look at doing more of these in the days ahead. I remain thankful for all that you are doing to support Fairfax County Public Schools. I hope all of you stay healthy, stay calm, and remember to practice the social distancing that we have talked about and know that we are all in this together, and that Fairfax County Public Schools will persevere. Stay strong Fairfax County Public Schools, and I will talk to you again very soon.