April 24, 2020

Good afternoon Cotopaxi Students, Staff, Families and Community:

Weekly Message: We are entering the last week of April and it is definitely a new environment. It has been another week packed with information from conversations with Governor Polis, Commissioner Anthes and numerous Colorado Department of Education staff, Rural Advocacy, Colorado School Finance Project, State Superintendents, South Central BOCES Superintendent Committee, Fremont Collaborative, Fremont Health Department, our State Treasurer along with various experts across the state. Many guiding documents have been shared out from various agencies and they will continue to evolve as our situation continues to evolve. Currently additional recommendations will be shared regarding summer meal programs, possible summer school programs, and specific requirements necessary if/when schools reopen in the Fall. The Governor and Commission stated the goal is to reopen schools in the Fall, however, that will be dependent upon the progression of containment efforts dealing with COVID-19, with the removal of his “stay at home” order and our medical facilities ability to manage confirmed cases. Therefore, we must prepare for 3 or 4 different scenarios/options/backup plans as we plan for the 2020-2021 school year. As with our overarching theme during this time of dealing with and managing the changes due to COVID19, we will keep you apprised of any new information and guidance in order to effectively help you plan for the future.

Announcement of No Return to In-School Instruction for the year: As we announced earlier this week, although we had hoped to return to campus, unfortunately, with the Governor’s new orders, that will not be possible (at least not in the “normal” sense of the word). Individual and small group (under 10) instruction is possible for in school instruction. However, we will continue to provide the majority of instructional services to our students through remote/online practices and alternative instructional packets. Teachers and Staff are working hard to strengthen our remote instructional practices each and every day. I cannot express my gratitude and appreciation for all the efforts of our amazing teachers and staff as well as our students and parents’ commitment in working with us through this challenging journey. We are in this for the long haul and it is important to note the numerous ‘positives’ coming from this crisis. Some of those positives are reflected by seeing everyone working together, focusing on solutions, thinking creatively, showing grace, and doing what is right for our students. We are entering a new era of education and together we can create the best scenario for all our students, which is always our main priority.

Governor Polis “Stay at Home” executive order expires and “Safer at Home” order announced: The “stay at home” order will expire on April 26, 2020 and his “safer at home” guidelines go into effect on April 27, 2020. Governor Polis announced this order and was able to work with Commission Anthes and state superintendents to clarify expectations for our school district. School Districts may continue to offer individual or one-on-one instructional possibilities to our students and he also encouraged school districts to utilize our buildings to support families within our communities. The official order has not been pushed out yet. however once we receive it, we will get it posted to our website. This order will allow us to finalize plans on designs for the end of the school year.

With that, I know you will have many questions and we are working diligently to provide answers to you as soon as possible. Some of your topics might include:

- How will it be determined if my child(ren) can advance to the next grade level?
- How are final grades being determined?
- Has my child successfully completed secondary credits to remain on track to graduate?
- How will assigned Chromebooks, textbooks and other materials be returned to the school?
- How can my child(ren) pick up materials left in their classrooms or lockers?
- What plans are being made for our Cotopaxi High School Graduation ceremony?
- What about other traditional promotion celebrations such as Pre-School, Kindergarten, 5th and 8th Grade?
- What about other end of year celebrations like awards assemblies, knowledge bowl and sport recognition, Prom, etc.
• Will meal deliveries or other services be available throughout the summer?

We will have all those answers and will send out more information soon to our students and families next week. Unfortunately, plans can continue to change as further executive orders or guidelines are issued, however, we feel confident that many of these areas can now be finalized.

School-Community Connections: “Conversation with the Superintendent”: We realize in this time of social distancing, it is easy to feel isolated. Although these weekly information letters may be beneficial, that cannot replace conversation with a human being. This was made evident within the recent District Accountability Zoom Meeting when the following question was asked “Would it be possible to consider an open forum type zoom meeting for the community?” I am paraphrasing just a little. However, that is a wonderful idea, almost like a virtual town hall meeting where people may express their concerns and questions out loud to one another. We may not have all the answers, but it would give us the opportunity to have positive back and forth discussions, check in with each other, share encouraging stories and reconnect. This open forum meeting would be completely voluntary but this will give us another avenue to share communications during these unprecedented times. So, with this concept in mind, I will look to the first week in May to schedule our first School-Community Virtual “Conversation with the Superintendent”. Please stay tuned within the next few week for a letter with more information.

Meal Delivery: We will send our reminder message this Sunday, however, our next delivery is schedule on Monday, April 27, 2020 from 5 pm - 7 pm at all four locations. I do apologize, I know that recent broadcast announcements on the radio were incorrect; those have been corrected. With all the information being published, our information got mixed with some of Custer counties. Thank you to those that contacted us so we could get that corrected. Our food (and instructional packet) deliveries will continue to be completed once a week on Mondays. We provide 4 days-worth of breakfast and lunch meals to any child 18 years of age or younger. Our locations include the Howard Volunteer Fire Department, the Coaldale Community Center, the Cotopaxi School and the ‘Y’ bus stop. We do want to remind everyone that if you are switching stops to please contact the school so we can ensure that your child(ren) meals and materials can be delivered. As always, if you are unable to make our scheduled delivery date/time, just contact us at 719-942-4131 and it will be our pleasure to make other arrangements with you throughout the week.

Website & Resources: We want to continue to ensure that our website and posted resources are of value to everyone. Please let us know if you have been unable to locate information or if you would like specific information not covered to be considered. Your input is valuable and appreciated. We will continue to share out important COVID-19 announcements so please continue to visit our website. Our first means of communication will continue to be shared through our ‘all call’ system, then posted to our Facebook page and website. If you have questions, input items, concerns or comments please do not hesitate to contact us at either dvanesselstine@cotopaxire3.org or keckelberry@cotopaxire3.org.

Remember we are in this together! Let us know if we can help in any way.

Danielle Van Esselstine, Superintendent