As we begin our first week of online learning activities, please know we recognize that not all aspects of our distance learning opportunities will work well for everyone right away, or ever. Our intention is to do our absolute best to allow students to continue to learn while not adding stress to Highland families who are facing many issues beyond school.

Here are two assumptions that have been shared with teachers as they plan and conduct their classes/courses:

A) **Access to well-planned and appropriate virtual learning opportunities would be in the best interest of our students and their families during an extended closure.**

- Even maintaining basic reading and math skills is significant to avoid a really extended “summer slump.” We need to help students keep practicing to the greatest extent possible.
- Clear yet flexible expectations will be important. Teachers, to the greatest extent possible, will identify what they view as essential learnings for the balance of the year for their grade and courses. We will all make every effort to ensure all students have the opportunity to master those essentials.
- Teachers will also be providing other learning opportunities that will be very appropriate for their classes, but that may not rank as essential, but will keep kids engaged, learning, and growing. Teachers will provide a wide range of learning opportunities for all, knowing there will be mixed engagement and success for a variety of reasons.
- Teachers will seek help if any student for any reason is not accessing essential learning. The system can support with outreach by other staff or with targeted tutoring by an aide. We will also provide paper and pencil work for students unable to link in online.
- Learning will vary significantly. Everyone will need to be comfortable recognizing what both teachers and students can control, and work as within that arena.

B) **Our virtual plans should first “do-no-harm”** by attending to both of the following:

- Parents/Students anxiety/stress levels
- Staff anxiety/stress levels

As we shared in our March 19 letter to parents, we realize this is a totally new experience for all of our families. It is a totally new experience for us, too. That means we will all be learning as we go. Our pledge to you is to listen, learn, and make adjustments as needed.

As we move forward many questions will arise. Unfortunately, the circumstances of our world today are still changing so fast, that plans we make today may be changed by new developments tomorrow. Given that any answers to questions could change, we’ll provide answers as we know them in real time to the questions we most frequently hear. If you have any questions you would like us to add to the FAQ, please email jtarrell@highland.k12.wi.us or nhendrickson@highland.k12.wi.us.

1. **What if we don’t have internet access?**

Mr. Tucker has been busy providing families options for internet access. If this ends up being impossible, we will provide texts, and paper and pencil learning materials.
2. What if parents’ work schedules don’t allow them the time to assist with the online learning?
The age of your child will determine the amount of assistance that may be needed. All students, however, have had significant experience with using technology and with the learning programs, so they should be able to work independently on the learning opportunities their teachers are recommending. Email or call your child/ren’s teacher/s and let them know any questions that you have about expectations or pacing, and they will work with you to address your concerns.

3. We are having difficulty sharing our internet access and computers because we as parents are working from home in addition to having our kids learning from home. How do we balance everyone’s need to have access?

We have set up as many of the learning opportunities as we can to be “time neutral.” For younger students, they will be able to practice their reading and math skills in the i-Ready online program at any time during the day. Older students who are using Google Classroom will also be able to access and work on their classes at any time. We are setting up class meetings to be as conflict free as we can make them, but these class meetings will allow students to see each other and interact, as well as ask questions of the teachers. To a large extent these meetings will be optional. During our first week, these meetings are being set up so that we can test the system.

It would be very helpful if your family could create a schedule for your kids, so they get into a routine of doing their school work on a regular basis, and you can schedule around others’ needs for internet or computer access. We are working to make sure at least 50% of students in a family have a computer. We hope students can share, too. If this ever is a problem, then Mr. Tucker is the person to contact.

4. How will all of this learning be graded?

For elementary students, classroom teachers will be collecting as much information as they can over the next two months to pass on to the next year’s teachers, so in the fall teachers will know what skills from the prior grade level may need to be taught or retaught so we don’t find gaps in student learning. The focus, of course, will be on gaining the foundational skills in reading, writing, and math. Kids just need to keep practicing their reading and math as much as they can, and the teachers will catch them up on anything missed once we’re back to school. And have fun with all of the creative Cardinal Challenges and Bingo activities for Art, Computers, Music, and PE.

For middle and high school students, all courses will be graded on a Pass/Fail basis. Teachers are sharing with students and parents the expectations for earning a Pass grade. For some high school classes where students may earn college credits, expectations for those credits are set by the college (SWTC, UW-Eau Claire, etc.). Students in these classes would still earn high school credit on a Pass/Fail basis.

Email or call your child/ren’s teacher/s and let them know any questions that you have, and they will work with you to address your concerns.

5. Will all of this effort on distance learning be worth it for everyone in the end?

Absolutely! Continuity of learning for Highland kids is terribly important. Engaging minds in quality experiences will not only help our kids when they return to school, but will also support those life skills of perseverance, hard work, patience, organization, independence, and initiative that will always serve them well. Let’s make this break, no matter how long it lasts, as exciting and productive as we can.

Also, we don’t know yet whether WIAA will still try to work in a “short season” for baseball and softball – we want everyone ready to go for that if it would happen. And credits will still matter at the high
school. While meeting a “Pass” grade should not be a problem for any of our students, if nothing is done for the entire 4th quarter, credit may not be granted for the full semester, and a student could be asked to repeat the course next year.

6. What about expectations for Seniors? Any special plans for them?

Aside from worries for the health and welfare of our kids and families, our hearts are most troubled by the impact this closure is having on our Seniors. So many abrupt changes came to their lives, that we’re sure it has been a hard adjustment. Mr. Tarrell led a virtual meeting with several staff members and the Senior Class last week so they could ask questions and the staff could provide information. The Senior Exit Project expectations have been waived beyond what was already due to be completed. Any Seniors wishing to drop classes that are not required for graduation, may do so, as long as they maintain WIAA eligibility if that is a concern for them. Check with Ms. Michek if you have a question regarding that.

We will make a decision at a later date regarding Graduation. If restrictions change related to the number of people who can congregate at one location, we will explore options for holding a graduation ceremony. We know this is a milestone event and will do everything possible to host Graduation.

7. We are receiving so much information from so many places, what if we can’t keep up with it all?

First, we have saved all of the district’s communications regarding the closure to the district’s web page. When you log into the web site or the app on your phone, go to the Documents tab and look to the folder entitled “Virtual Learning/Covid-19 Updates.” This location will house all of our communications to families. So you can check this folder periodically to make sure you didn’t miss a news item or an update.

Second, for information related to your child’s class work, you can go to the teacher’s web site or request an invite to Google Classroom. When we invite you, as a parent, to the appropriate Google Classroom, you will get all of the assignment and stream posting notifications, but you will not be able to directly access the classroom to view student work. Please visit with your child if you have questions about the assignments. Additionally, you will receive a weekly update on your child(ren's) status in the class. See the Document folder on Virtual Learning for more details regarding Google Classroom Guardian access.

And as always, email or call your child/ren’s teacher/s or Mr. Tarrell and let them know any questions that you have, and they will work with you to address your concerns.