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Parents, Students, and Community Members,

I write this letter to you knowing that the uncertainty of how school will start weighs heavily on each and everyone of you. School is the most human of enterprises and it has been absent from our lives since March 13, 2020. We are now working on yet another start of school plan focused on in-person learning. We do this knowing full well that despite our best efforts we may not be allowed to conduct classes in this way. Our staff, our school board, and myself know the importance of children being with peers and learning from a caring adult. The resolve to be in that environment remains undeterred and we will be there the minute we are allowed to do so. In this place of uncertainty, I will try to address some of the questions parents and the community have.

We have opted for a later start date hoping to take advantage of the possibility of offering instruction to remediate learning loss from the spring. The later start time also gave us the ability to plan for delivery of instruction in an environment very different from “normal” school. To date we have not been informed as to whether or not we will receive the additional funding, beyond our state allocation, necessary to deliver that instruction. In the event that we do not receive the funding we will adjust our calendar and dismiss ten days earlier in the spring. We will notify the community once we know for certain how we can proceed.

Late last week we were notified of our state allocation for the coming school year. We now know that our operational funding will be decreased by nearly \$1 million dollars from last year’s budget levels. This places the additional funding we had hoped for in question.

Parents and guardians should enroll your child in an online only environment if you believe that attending school will place you or your child at risk. I can speak to you about the low levels of risk to children and healthy adults, but at the end of the day only a parent or guardian can make that decision.

From where I sit today there is a nominal chance that we will be allowed to bring elementary students back for in-person learning on September 8, 2020. If you want your child to have that opportunity you should enroll them in the hybrid-learning model. You can always transition to on-line if you become concerned, but it is extremely difficult for us to transition from on-line to

hybrid and we can only do that at the semester. To give yourself the greatest amount of flexibility I recommend that you choose the hybrid model. Students in the hybrid model will be transitioned to five day a week instruction as soon as it is allowed.

For parents of seventh grade through twelfth grades, we must all be prepared for on-line learning continuing well beyond September 8, 2020. We will transition students from remote learning to hybrid and to in-person instruction only if they are attending in the hybrid model. Students enrolled in on-line only can only make a transition to in-person learning at semester break. For middle school and high school students wanting to participate in band and choir you should choose the hybrid model. Current public health restrictions on band and choir do not allow for playing or singing in a classroom setting indoors. We do not know when that will be lifted. Currently we have a sports schedule for high school and middle school, but there is no certainty that it will occur.

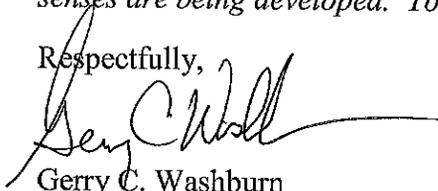
I would be lying to parents, students, and the community if I said that any on-line learning platform was anything other than a pale imitation of education as we know it. The connectivity issues of the Spring of 2020 have not been resolved. We are working to get the infrastructure in place to allow better connectivity to our buildings, but that will not be completed until 2021 at the earliest. Internet connectivity across the community has not changed significantly since this spring either. Until then we will do our level best to provide an education for your children using the tools and capacity that we have, but it will not be the same as our in-person instruction.

Finally, as we navigate these uncertain times, we as a community must come to terms with the fact that there are children in our community that are at risk. We lost a child to domestic violence last week and I pray that she is the last. I am asking each of you to be aware of the children in your neighborhoods. If you see things that don't seem right please err on the side of caution and notify authorities. While schools have been safe spaces for children, we are not being allowed to provide those spaces for them. We need our community to help as best it can until we are able to help the community and our children as best we can.

My faith persuades me that we will get through these times, but I know that now more than ever it will take our entire community pulling together to get our children through these times. I leave you with these words from Gabriela Mistral and the hope that each of us and those who are making decisions affecting children find them in their heart.

"We are guilty of many errors and many faults, but our worst crime is abandoning the children, neglecting the fountain of life. . . Many of the things we need can wait. The children cannot. Right now, is their time. Their bones are being formed, their blood is being made, and their senses are being developed. To them we cannot answer "Tomorrow," their name is today."

Respectfully,



Gerry C. Washburn
Superintendent