The following is a briefing for the week of April 27th on behalf of Dr. Cash.

Dear Colleagues:

Teachers may be out of immediate sight, but they are keeping a strong presence with students as they make efforts through virtual and tactile means. Krista Van Wagner, home & careers teacher at Bilingual Academy #33 has a wonderful array of videos of completed projects from her students this week. The students documented their skills using kits prepared by Ms. Van Wagner that include sewing buttons, and making chocolate chip cookies, rice, and salt play dough (with knife skills). The message: Do try this at home!

![Image of completed projects]

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Katti Theriault, a 6:1:1 teacher at Hamlin Park #74 says, “I know my students are struggling with our current normal, so I’m sending out some fun mail today!” Laminated bookmarks in the likeness of Mrs. Theriault and personalized work packets are going to student households to encourage learning fun. “Our students need our connection and to know that we still love and care about them,” she says.

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On Wednesday, I convened a meeting with the District Parent Congress to have a frank and open dialogue about school closure. The voice of our parent leaders, who represent hundreds of BPS parents was clear, informed, and collaborative. In a show of full solidarity, each parent leader reported that during this historic global pandemic, they do not want to see buildings re-opened until it is safe to do so. Other agenda items included the district’s 2020-2021 budget, 2-way communication, wellness outreach to our most vulnerable families, and the District’s Committee of Stakeholder plans. We also affirmed that the Education Bargain calls for a 50/50 partnership at all times, but especially during difficult times such as these.
Distribution of grade 3 – 8 laptops continued yesterday and today. After this final distribution, principals will be able to execute individual plans by school to ensure the remaining students receive their laptops. These devices will be needed for summer programming. Hot spots were also distributed this week to Advanced Placement (AP) students, who have upcoming AP exams. Hot spots are also being given out to parents who have responded to our district survey regarding their WiFi needs.

While actual college tours are not possible at present, the District and our partner, Say Yes Buffalo, will be conducting virtual tours on Facebook live May 4th through 8th. Seniors will be able to participate in live chats with local college representatives, while they continue to plan their futures. Pandemic aside, we are stressing that plans need to be made. The world will have to catch up with our students’ aspirations when it can, but planning and aspiring must go on.
I held a virtual Cabinet Meeting today in which my Executive Team reviewed the status of device distribution, student tracking, wellness checks and outreach, and student placement for next year. In light of Governor Cuomo’s Executive Order today that will keep schools closed through the end of the year, we will continue to refine our plans for summer school. We will plan for as many practicable scenarios as we can imagine. One option is to have master teachers filmed doing lessons that can then be shared with every student who needs to skills in that content. We also discussed ways to celebrate our graduating seniors. The secondary ASLs will confer with principals and present creative ideas to the Cabinet.
HEROES AMONG US

Today we celebrated National School Lunch Hero Day! This recognition takes on a whole new meaning this year, as our Food Service workers are frontline essential personnel, making sure that every child receives nutrition each and every day during the pandemic! The Food Service Team has distributed over 758,849 meals at 28 sites since schools shut down on March 18th!

Today is also National School Principals’ Day! The role of the principal is the most important leadership role in a school community. This that has not changed with the Coronavirus pandemic. A recent survey in the United States indicated that the presence of an effective principal has a positive impact on student achievement. In addition, effective principals retain effective teachers, which establishes a culture and climate for student success. Thank you to our fabulous Team of Principals and Assistant Principals, who know, love, and care for our students well beyond the required 180 days of school.

Below, Principal Greg Lodinsky welcomes da Vinci #212 students on the first day of school in happier times.

Be well, be safe, and be good to yourself!

Dr. Kriner Cash
Superintendent