Dear BPS Community:

As we enter the weekend of Easter, celebrating the resurrection of Jesus Christ, I hope that everyone, regardless of religious persuasion, appreciates the concept of renewal and new beginnings that the holiday represents. While we in the Buffalo Public Schools have spent the last several weeks adapting to dramatic changes in our day-to-day lives, we are deeply empathetic to the emotional toll the worldwide pandemic is causing for our families. We remain concerned and vigilant about the trauma our families and staff are experiencing as a result of the pandemic. Everyone has been affected by this in one way or another. We have many resources for assisting one another on our website, along with a multitude of efforts to connect our children and families to whatever they may need. We do this knowing that all of it is a journey by collective faith and prayer. We look forward to the day when our children are able to safely return to our schools. We will be ready for them!

We continue to offer food service to our children, and have served 322,526 meals to date. Schools are routinely cleaned and sanitized. Remote instruction continues, and this coming week computer devices will be rolled out to grades 3 through 8 as we previously did with grades 9 through 12. Child care for our parents in essential health care occupations has been successfully arranged. We offer our very highest level of commendation and gratitude for our Food Service Team, our School Safety and Security Team, our Custodial Team, our Nurse Service Team, and our Instructional Teams.

While many adaptations have taken place, the infrastructure of educational work remains essentially the same. Principals have maintained grade-level and full faculty meetings through online conferencing, with the expectation that quality, grade-appropriate instruction must continue. Students are checking in and getting work done, often with the help of parents who have embraced the Education Bargain’s primary intent – the 50/50 Parent/District partnership. Teachers have continued to reach out to, and check in with, their students. Many, in fact, keep regular class conferencing hours. All are encouraging their students to complete their work.
Some parents, like Shailoh’s mom, connect the Math lessons from Schoology up to her television (below). Shailoh’s Stanley Makowski #99 kindergarten teacher, Sarah Johnson, reports that Shailoh’s mother’s friends are asking her how she did it. Ms. Johnson says, “He is really excited that he is doing school work at home. We have put all the lessons for ELA, Math, Social Studies and Science on one teacher’s web page so all the Kindergarten parents can access the work as needed. I am proud of our Kindergarten Team and how quickly they pulled this together.” Team work makes the dream work!

Meanwhile, our elementary schools have a healthy competition going that involves making inspirational videos to rev students up before taking the State Assessment Tests in ELA and Math. The Frank A. Sedita Community School #30 video I have attached here, was originally intended to get students psyched for the Math and ELA assessments...and then turned into something else once we were affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. It is a beautifully creative testimony to our belief in the importance of education, and to the lengths we will go to show children we love them and are always rooting for them. It is also fun to know that our “Dragons” can compose and carry a tune! You have got to see this! Please click on it.
Sedita teachers send inspirational messages to their students – excerpt from video

Donations continue to come in, as follows. Thank you to all for these essential items!
- 120 food-filled backpacks each for 28 sites from Feed More WNY
- 5000 Face Masks - Donated by Erie County Executive Mark Poloncarz
- 500 Face Masks and 1000 Medical Gloves - Donated by Drs. Sam and Todd Shatkin (plastic surgeon and dentist respectively)
- 5000 Face Masks on order from Independent Health Foundation
- 2500 individually wrapped hand wipes from WellNow Urgent Care
- 14,000 Disney books donated by The Teacher's Desk
- 12,000 decks of cards donated by Project Play WNY
- School supplies donated by UB School of Social Work, Blue Cross Blue Shield, Read to Succeed, and Afterschool Network of Buffalo
- 600 back packs filled with household items and non-perishables donated by FeedMore WNY
- 3360 food-filled backpacks donated by FeedMore WNY
- 6000 additional books donated by The Teachers Desk
- 1000 masks from the Chinese Club of Western New York

According to data from our partners at Say Yes, last week’s inaugural virtual Saturday Academy had 5,460 viewers, 78 shares, 15 watch parties, and approximately 100 participants on ZOOM. We will continue this innovative virtual programming tomorrow. Please pre-register on Eventbrite and you will receive the link and passcode for entrance. Topic: The Art of Connecting - Virtual Saturday Academy. Time: April 11, 10:00 AM Eastern Time (US and Canada). Please tune in.
Because life goes on, and in big ways, it is a special honor to announce that Lead Associate Superintendent for School Leadership Casandra Wright successfully defended her dissertation on April 3rd! She is now Dr. Casandra Wright, lifelong learner and role model to her family (pictured here), her colleagues, and all whose lives she touches. Congratulations, “Sandy”! We are proud of you!

Be well, be safe, and keep your family close no matter how far. Happy Easter!

Dr. Kriner Cash
Superintendent