

April 17, 2020

Dear Hephatha Community,

The past few weeks have been a tremendously challenging time, as our traditional way of life has been altered in a way none of us could imagine. Through these challenging times, our collective priority has been to provide normalcy for our children both academically and socially.

I want to thank each of you personally for working overtime in providing support to the students in making the transition to collaborative learning. There have been growing pains in the complete overhaul in our academic model, but the hard work and dedication made by teachers, parents, students, and support staff have allowed for a model that meets our student's learner needs while interacting remotely.

There has been the thought all along that, "this too shall pass". While we know that nothing in the past couple of weeks has caught God reeling. The "pause" button may have been hit in our lives, but we know that His will shall prevail over any earthly challenges. We have continued to use the same model of monitoring the COVID-19 pandemic and the steps that need to be taken to protect our children as best as we can. Through continued monitoring from local and federal health officials, as well as factoring the local decision of the OCDE, Hephatha administration and Board of Education have made the decision to continue collaborative learning through the end of May, the traditional conclusion of our academic year.

This is not an ideal decision or situation, but Hephatha will remain pursuant to health officials' recommendations. This does NOT mean that we are "closing school" or "ending the year". Our children deserve closure to this academic year that is comparative to past years. As social distancing guidelines change, options will be discussed as to how our children will have the opportunity to collectively celebrate the 2019-2020 academic year.

In the meantime, we will strive to continue to provide the best academic product we can. Your child's teacher is fully invested in providing a quality academic experience and education for each of their students. Many have been working, on average, 9-10 hour days to limit the academic interruption this pandemic may cause. The teachers are committed to maintaining the same academic and relational expectations that have been in place all year.

The strength of the Hephatha community is the connectedness and support we offer each other through times of joy and times of affliction. Let us continue to utilize this strength not only for our children but for one and other.

"Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thank in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you" 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18

Below is more detail for specific topics of conversation based on Board of Education recommendations.

- **Banquets:** End of the year award ceremonies and blessings chapel will take place remotely. Further details will be provided in the upcoming weeks.
- **Graduation:** Plans are being discussed for both Kindergarten and 8th-grade graduation. The possible scenarios and dates will be impacted by upcoming changes in social distancing guidelines, as well as state and federal recommendations in regards to easing back to our traditional way of life.
- **Summer Camps:** Summer Camps continue to be planned with the same robust activities and adventure as past years.
- **3rd Trimester Assessments:** Hephatha is an assessment based school, each trimester the students participate in a myriad of assessment modalities. The results are documented and tracked throughout the time students are enrolled at Hephatha. For those interested, assessments will be offered in the month of June.
- **Academic Model:** Hephatha will continue to maintain current standards and academic expectations. Partnership is key in this model, teachers will continue to be flexible and understanding regarding due dates and student support for specific assignments. Additionally, a "FLEX FRIDAY" will be implemented. Flex Friday will offer a little less structure, a time for students to get individual help, and time to catch up on any work they may be behind in. There will still be teacher/principal interactions on Flex Friday.
- **Outdoor Education Trips:** A major tradition of the Hephatha education experience is outdoor education trips. The 5th and 6th grade trips to Astro Camp and El Camino Pines will take place next year. No student interested in participating in these trips will not miss out on these experiences. Traditional trips for next year will also take place during their regularly scheduled times. A zoom parent meeting has been arranged for families planning to attend the Washington D.C. trip next year. A separate email has been sent out regarding meeting details.
- For a summarized report from our Collaborative Learning Survey, refer to the link provided in your email. Due to the personal nature of most of the comments they will not be published, however, if you are interested in greater detail regarding the survey please reach out.

In Christ,



Eric Deyke
Principal
Hephatha Lutheran Church and School