



March 24, 2020

Dear Parents, Students and Staff:

Arthur Unobskey, Ed.D.
Superintendent of Schools
508.358-3763

I hope you are faring well during this challenging time. My two sons are home from college, which is wonderful for my wife and me, but they are struggling with virtual schooling and miss their friends and teachers. My younger son needs a regular break from online coursework, so I have hired him to tutor me in calculus one hour each day. Learning math again is like pulling heavy cobwebs from my brain!

Parry Graham, Ed.D.
Assistant Superintendent
508.358.3772

I suspect that our students, who may grumble about homework or waking up early when school is in session, actually miss their old routines immensely. They miss going to school, seeing teachers and friends, learning new things, participating in group activities, and so much more. If it is any comfort to them, their teachers, guidance counselors, teaching assistants, and staff miss them terribly and are working incredibly hard to figure out ways to ensure that there is regular communication and continuity in the midst of all of the disruptions.

Richard Whitehead, M.Ed.
Director of Student
Services
508.358.3756

Susan Bottan, MBA
Director of Finance &
Operations
508.358.3750

I write this letter on Tuesday evening, which marks the completion of our fourth day of enrichment learning and our eighth day of school closure. I want to thank our teachers, staff and administrators who have been working incredibly hard since schools closed. We all know that virtual learning can never replace in-person school experiences. Our teachers are masters of the craft of interacting with students face-to-face, not through a machine. The technology piece alone has required a steep learning curve for many, and I want to acknowledge the unanticipated extra hours of at-home professional development that these closures have required. During this closure, in addition, our staff have developed these activities while managing the sudden shifts in the lives of those in their own households.

Tony Laing, Ph.D.
METCO Director
508.358.3754

Leisha F. Simon, M.Ed.
Director of Technology &
Digital Learning
508.358.3714

Amidst these challenges, I have seen our teachers put together extremely thoughtful learning experiences. I have watched videos in which a teacher sparks household hunts for answers to a question or for materials to build a model for a physics experiment. Students have written about their families' responses to social distancing, and teachers have responded with formative feedback to help strengthen their voices. They have developed multi-step math problems in which students have had the opportunity to apply their math knowledge to analyze complex real world problems. Perhaps most importantly, principals, teachers and counselors have diligently sought to connect with all of their students in a variety of ways, from video chats to morning meetings.

I would also like to express my appreciation for our Administrative Council, composed of principals, assistant principals, along with Central Office administrators, who provide invaluable leadership and guidance for the District. We have met each day to assess the rollout of our learning plan thus far, and strategize for the days ahead. Thank you also to our custodial staff who thoroughly disinfected and cleaned our buildings so they are ready for us when we return. I want to thank Food Services Director Cheryl Judd and her staff for preparing meals to hand off to METCO Director Dr. Tony Laing and bus driver, Eileen Dickson, who have been delivering them to our Boston families in need, and will continue to do so for as long as the closure is in effect. I know there are Wayland staff to acknowledge and thank whom I failed to mention here. If you know of someone, please send me their names so I can be sure to recognize their service in a future letter.

I want to extend my thanks to the students' parents/guardians/adult caretakers, whose professional and personal lives have also been impacted by the extended school closures. I want you to know that I am aware that many parents and guardians feel anxious about the impact of an extended school closure on our students' learning: some parents want schools to send home more work, while others may feel burdened with the responsibility for their children's learning. If you and your child are having difficulty with the online communications or enrichment activities, please reach out to your child's teacher or principal. We understand that each parent has a different amount of time, resources and comfort level in suddenly being their child's "teacher." We are here for you and your child.

Parents have been supportive, patient and motivated to make this experience work for their children. Let us not forget that in many ways, our first priority is to do what is within our control to prevent this virus from spreading further. It is critical that each one of us be vigilant about practicing social distancing. I know that it can be hard to say no when your child begs you to see their friend. However, I want to echo the advice of medical officials, who are urging Americans to stay home. Older students, you are at an age when your attitude and decisions have a significant impact. We need your energetic investment in these drastic measures. Thank you for doing what is needed to protect our community in Wayland, Boston, and beyond.

Up-to-date information can be found at:

[Town of Wayland-COVID-19 Virus Information](#)

[City Of Boston COVID-19 Virus Information](#)

As Billy Ocean sang, "When the going gets tough, the tough get going." I am heartened by the countless ways that we have pulled together as a community to support each other, provide for those in need, and find creative and unexpected ways to weather this prolonged period of separation.

We at the Wayland Public Schools miss our students very much.

I will continue to share updates regarding the closure as we receive them. Please feel free to contact me if I can be of any assistance.

All my best,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Arthur Unobskey". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, sweeping flourish at the end.

Arthur Unobskey