



An Introduction to Penn Cambria's Continuity of Education Plan

March 26, 2020

Dear Families,

As we developed a continuity of education plan for the students within our district, we have been forced to reflect upon what is feasible knowing the limitations we face in terms of technological access based not just on devices, but also on geography. We also know that many of our families are struggling with childcare, adjusting to changing schedules, dealing with economic stress, and much more.

This pandemic has brought fear, uncertainty, and incredible stress for people across the world. However, the current situation has also given us all a critical opportunity to stop and reflect upon what is truly important in our lives and for our communities at a time when so much is uncertain. As educators, we have asked ourselves tough questions and have been forced to consider what matters most for our students. The answer has become very clear to us over the last several days as we have worked with teachers and heard from stakeholders. At Penn Cambria, what we value the most is the opportunity to have a positive impact on the lives of our students!

This crisis has given us a chance to show our students that in dark times, we pull together and we are resilient! We know there are limits, and we know things won't be perfect. We all have concerns about the impact of this disruption on the curriculum, on our core content, and on student academic achievement.

The state assessments are cancelled, the status of schools throughout the country is changing by the minute, colleges are making incredible adjustments to schedules, grading practices and more. It is a world unlike any we have seen in education in recent history.

However, instead of dwelling on the imperfections and the stress of change, we have decided to focus on what we feel can be an amazing, although certainly unique, opportunity for us all. What could we do during this time that would be realistic? What would benefit our students the most in the long run as they look back upon this time? What if we don't issue grades? What if activities aren't required? Just for this one unique moment in time, when exceptions are being made to every rule, what if we actually consider working with our students to build relationships and help them see the power of learning for the sake of learning?

Four days ago, as an administrative team, we all felt the weight of the world on our shoulders as we considered the incredible responsibility we have to educate students in this uncertain time and in these uncertain conditions. However, by Tuesday evening after meeting with our faculty, we are now excited to consider the possibilities in a world where flexibility is the new norm.

As we put out the call to action, our faculty have been incredible! Instead of dwelling on what we can't do, they have focused on how they can remain connected and involved in the learning of their students in a variety of ways. They miss their students! Operating from their homes, they have learned and used

Zoom for video conferencing on the fly, they have taken the lead and collaborated with, supported, and helped each other. They are coming up with incredible new ideas for learning activities, while still using some activities that might be traditional but that they know work.

Our current plan has been developed with a clear focus on our mission of preparing productive citizens in a safe and positive environment. You will likely notice more opportunities for feedback and relationship building as opposed to grades and deadlines. You will see more student choice than prescribed lists. You will see opportunities for students to take the lead in learning and being offered support and an opportunity to share that learning with their teachers or peers. Of course, you will also see some traditional activities. This is a very new concept for us all and one that is taking a bit of time to wrap our heads around. However, our teachers' energy, excitement and commitment to your children is second to none. They are generating new ideas and more choices by the minute!

Please know that our plan is far from perfect, so we ask that you be patient with us as well. There are bound to be bumps in the road. I know some will elect to go to FaceBook and criticize and complain about our plan and our vision. Those actions are out of my control. I respectfully ask that you communicate with us with the same respect we've tried to communicate with you. Please know, the commitment of our faculty and administration to your children is our highest priority.

There will most definitely be changes and adjustments to the plan moving forward if the closure is extended. We are still dealing with options for things like college dual enrollment courses and more. We continue to hope for the best in terms of a quick return to normal activities as we plan for the potential for longer closures. However, for today, we enter this new experience as educators with optimism and even excitement!

An outline of our general plan has been published to our website. Links to building specific plans will be built on our website and active by the morning of Monday March 30, 2020.

Please feel free to distribute publicly and post on social media outlets you are able to access.

Sincerely,

William W. Marshall

Superintendent

Penn Cambria School District