



Dear GPPSS Students, Faculty and Community,

First, I want to commend each of you for the flexibility and passion you've shown this past week as we've navigated these unprecedented times. Earlier today the Michigan Department of Education (MDE) published a [Memo](#) that addresses fairly technical aspects of pupil accounting and state funding, including student clock hours and instructional days. This memo by the Michigan Department of Education appears to be an effort to apply political pressure on the State Legislature and the Governor, neither of whom have addressed these important issues. I would encourage you as faculty, students and parents, to stay the course. I believe this will be resolved in the political arena in Lansing.

To that end, the following is my commitment to you:

The work you are doing as students, teachers and parents matters and should continue.

Staff will continue to be compensated, per our collective bargaining agreements and commitment to our valued adults.

Student work will count. We know that we owe all of our students, especially our upperclassmen 'credit' for their hard work so that it applies to colleges, etc.

At this time, please continue to do what you have been doing.

If you as a parent, student or faculty member want to support us and our kids, reach out to your legislators and demand a solution that is student focused and values the work all of our community has done all year, including the past week. Specifically, advocate that the 180 day requirement and 1098 clock hours be 'forgiven' as it would be for a snow day, so that we can continue to provide remote learning opportunities that matter for our kids.

Minute by Minute and Day by Day

Everyone wants answers. Some decisions GPPSS will get to make. Other answers are being given to us from the Michigan Department of Education, Governor Whitmer, and the Michigan Department of Health.

No Answer Yet

We did not get an answer on "forgiveness days" on the 180 day school year or 75% attendance to count as a school day. The Michigan Legislature is coming back to Lansing on Wednesday, March 25, 2020, for another legislative session.

We don't know if schools will remain shut, or for how long. We do know that the Governor has Michigan schools closed until April 6, 2020. The Wayne County Superintendents unanimously plan to honor Spring Break.

We do know that Kansas, California and New York have closed their schools for the balance of the school year. We believe Michigan will consider closing for longer than April 6, 2020. The Michigan legislature will determine the number of days of forgiveness or potentially for the school year.

We do know that promotion and graduation are on the Governor and Michigan Legislative agenda. Until we know the days forgiven, the promotion and graduation question will remain open. GPPSS will do everything we can to make promotion and graduation happen following guidelines from the state.

We know our GPPSS teachers have given their all to make online learning work. We thank our administrative team for their support and suggestions. We appreciate the help and support from our parents as we all partner to educate our community's children. These are uncharted waters. We need to stay flexible and ready.

Here is what we know today

Coronavirus Testing

The Michigan Department of Health has ramped up the **Coronavirus testing**, so we will continue to see a spike in the number of positive results. Please keep the increase of tests in perspective as we see the number of positive Coronavirus tests being reported. Keep practicing social distancing and hand washing.

State Assessments

We do know the Michigan Department of Education asked the United States Department of Education about **assessments**. U.S. Secretary of Education Betsy DeVos announced today students impacted by school closures due to the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic can bypass standardized testing for the 2019-20 school year. Upon a proper request, the Department will grant a waiver to any state that is unable to assess its students due to the ongoing national emergency, providing relief from federally mandated testing requirements for this school year. GPPSS would not be taking the State assessments this school year if the federal waiver is approved by the United States Department of Education.

Advanced Placement Testing

The College Board also announced that **Advanced Placement tests**, scheduled to be administered in May, will be offered to students online for the 2019-20 exam administration due to the COVID-19 outbreak. For more information on free online learning sources and home testing updates, the College Board provides updates here:

<https://apcentral.collegeboard.org/about-ap/news-changes/coronavirus-update>

The Michigan Department of Education memo today also led to a number of other questions.

Will online learning count?

We did get an answer on whether we could convert online learning days for a day of instruction.

The message below is what GPPSS was sent at 11:05 a.m. on 3/20/20 regarding instructional hours, moments before it hit the press.

MEMO #COVID-19-016

Instructional Time During School Closure

Following the closure of all elementary and secondary school buildings on March 16, 2020 (pursuant to Governor Gretchen Whitmer's Executive Order 2020-5), the Michigan Department of Education (MDE) has received questions regarding instructional time during the school closure period. The purpose of this memo is to answer those questions.

http://www.michigan.gov/documents/mde/Guidance_Instructional_Time_684374_7.pdf

** To access all COVID-19 Updates, go to the MDE website at www.michigan.gov/mde.*

We do know the Michigan Department of Education has described “supplemental” instruction as recommended, but according to the guidelines shared is not graded. We do know that we have had an opportunity to do our best with online learning. We are meeting that challenge head on as we provide meaningful instruction and feedback to our students. Our GPPSS teachers have been awesome in their development of online instruction. Our GPPSS students have been engaged and ready to make it work as well. **Until we know more, we ask you to stay the course.**

We do know that we cannot trade online learning days for the mandated 180 school days. This is a “seat time” application that needs the Michigan Department of Education approval from the start of the school year. Seat time is the requirement that there are 180 student days and 1098 hours of instruction in a school year.

The bottom line: Do what’s best for kids

We know our parents expect the very best education for their children. Working together we can keep students learning as this situation develops and decisions are made. We ask you to share your thoughts. Reach out to legislators, the governor, our state and national board of education -- make sure our voices are heard. We need them to support our schools. Our district is doing everything we can to ensure our students continue to be engaged and learn.

We also know that now is not the time to panic or throw our hands up in defeat. This is a time when we show who we are and what we value. We value education. We value mental and physical health. We value our community. We will get through this. **GPPSS will continue to do what’s right for kids. Please be patient with us - and the best teachers in the state - as we determine a path forward.**