



March 2020—Issue 1

The Grizzlies Gazette



MESSAGE FROM THE SUPERINTENDENT

OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDENT



Greetings GRIZZLIES! I hope that you and your families are doing well upon receipt of this newsletter. We know that this is a time of uncertainty for many, as a result, we are hoping to provide you with helpful information from each department. Although we expect that the upcoming weeks will be challenging for our community, I am certain that we will continue to provide our students with the education that they need and deserve as well as the social emotional support as we work together to develop our continuous learning plan.

I'd like to thank so many of our amazing YCS community members! Thank you to our supportive Board of Education.

- Thank you to our outstanding community partners who have supported our food distribution and made donations.
- Thank you to those of you who have worked tirelessly to prepare and distribute meals to our students over the past few weeks.
- Thank you to those who have worked to ensure that our buildings are cleaned and secured.
- Thank you to those of you who have been engaging with our students and families during the closure.
- Thank you to those of you who have volunteered to participate in the online curriculum development.
- Thank you to those in the technology department for your work behind the scenes to keep the district progressing forward.
- Thank you to our business office for ensuring our staff and vendors are paid.
- Lastly, I'd like to thank all of our building administrators and central office staff for your leadership during this unprecedented time.

Our students and community are fortunate to have you, your love, commitment and professionalism in their lives. Their lives are richer because you are a part of YCS.

Although I am sure that we won't do everything perfectly over the next few weeks and months to come, I'd like you to know that we are working with you and our students in the forefront of our minds as we make all decisions. The decision to work on an online continuous learning plan is in the best interest of our students. It will be new learning for all of us. We are committed to working through this together with you. I am confident that we have everything we need to be successful in this endeavor with the help and support of our talented staff. I am looking forward to working alongside each of you as we prepare for the future of education in YCS together.

We began this year with the theme, "STRONGER TOGETHER-SAVING LIVES", I'm embracing these words today as we begin this new path forward together.

Alena Zachery Ross — Superintendent

Business Office

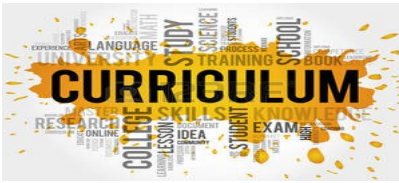
We hope you and your families are safe and staying healthy during these unprecedented times. Although this unanticipated closure has been unique to deal with, we are appreciative of the dedication and hard work of the entire department. We also appreciate everyone's patience as we have worked to ensure all bills are paid and responsibilities are met. We are certain that we will get through this. We are Stronger Together!



We would like to assure everyone that you will be paid for the March 31, 2020 payroll and April 15, 2020 payroll. For payroll After April 15, 2020, know that we are waiting for further legislative guidance and will be sure to communicate the next steps as decisions are made.

The business office continues to work diligently to make sure all the invoices that are coming in the mail are being paid and are working with every vendor to make sure that their invoices are paid.

Priya Nayak — Director of Business and Finance



Office of the Assistant Superintendent

A decision was made this week to hold third quarter grades. We will assign a “credit” or “no credit” grade for the remainder of the 2019-20 school year.

As we transition from Enrichment to Remote Distance Learning using Google Classroom as our Platform, we plan to use a Phase In style of leadership and implementation. We will spend the first two weeks connecting with students, helping them to understand how to navigate Google Classroom, how to set goals, learn remote learning norms and expectations, and we will focus on the development of social emotional learning. The first two weeks is an opportunity for us to reboot our 2019-20 school year by connecting with our students and creating an online community of belonging. Our SEL focus should be on the wellbeing of our students and their families.

We want to thank our committee leaders for coming together to create, design, and innovate a clear vision for our distance learning formal instructional process. Our committees continue to challenge each other to think from an innovator’s mindset. As a district we will continue to challenge our thinking by empowering our learning, unleashing our talents, and leading a culture of creativity.

YCS has committed to transitioning our PreK-12 instructional program into a one-to-one distance learning Google Classroom Platform using a Phase-In approach. We plan to use the first week after break to connect with the SEL of our students while working hard to create the instructional plan of delivery that we will carry out until the end of the school year. Each building leader will continue to assess the level of implementation and will develop a calendar of events.

As we move forward, we would like everyone to stay calm, flexible, engaged, connected, and safe. We encourage you to go slow to go fast, think less is more, trust the process, and stay on course. Finally, we invite you to unleash your many talents and explore non-traditional thinking as a way to innovate our collective work forward. Know that we are stronger together!

Carlos Lopez — Office of the Assistant Superintendent

Human Resources

The Human Resources departments would like to take this opportunity to thank all staff for their patience, endurance, and volunteer services, you are an amazing team! We are family and we are Stronger Together.



If you need to communicate with Human Resources, please email either Sue McCarty or Lois Nowling. Each of us values you as individuals and will respond as quickly as possible to meet your needs during this crucial time. Staff who are volunteering at the food distribution sites or are participating in food preparation must have a district-provided sign for their vehicle. Human Resources can send you the sign via email beginning March 27, 2020. Beginning March 30, 2020, all staff and volunteers will need to be screened per the Washtenaw County Health Department (WCHD) Guidelines. We will be assigning specific staff members to conduct these screenings and document the process on the form provided. This will be a coordinated effort with food service, facilities, and human resources. Please do not report to work or to food distribution sites if you have a fever or other symptoms that indicate you are ill. Also, if you have been exposed to COVID19 we are requesting that you do not report to any YCS location and follow all quarantine guidelines. We want to do our part to stop the spread of this virus.

It is important that all staff understand that they will receive a payroll check on March 31, 2020, and April 15, 2020. After April 15, 2020, we need to wait for legislator guidance as do all school districts statewide. We will keep you informed and updated as decisions are made.

A notice will go out regarding temporary changes in FMLA and the Emergency Sick Leave Act (we have to be in operation for this to take effect). This notice will come in your individual email. It will also be posted on the website when we have the appropriate language. It is very important that you, please remember to visit your email twice daily.

Finally all of the resources compiled by administration and technology regarding self-care, COVID19 and district updates are accessible on the YCS Website. Final reminder please check your email at least 2 times per day.

Sue McCarty — Human Resources Director



“Self-Care is giving the world the best of you not what is left of you.

Katie Reed





Student Support Services

We hope you and your families are safe and staying healthy during these unprecedented times. We are thinking about you and we definitely miss seeing you and our students.

We are making every effort to hold IEP's that are due during this time. If you are contacted to participate in a meeting, please work to avail yourself as both general education and special education staff are needed. We know that these can only be held "virtually" or by phone. We will make every attempt to hold these meetings in a timely manner, meeting all deadlines that are required.

Thank you to our staff who are continuing to reach out to our families to ask how they're doing and if there is anything that we can help them with during the quarantine. We also appreciate those staff members who have provided students with enrichment learning materials so that they can stay engaged educationally.

Currently, the district is working closely with the county special education director who has direct access to the state director. The WISD is using guidance also from the federal Office of Special Education and Related Services to support the work of districts during this time. To the greatest extent possible, we are working to ensure all students' rights under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and Michigan Administrative Rules of Special Education (MARSE) are being addressed.

The office of Student Support Services remains committed to the education of our students during this hiatus. If you have any questions and/or concerns, please do not hesitate to let us know.

Please stay safe and healthy.

E. Ruth Jordan — Student Support Services Director

Communications Department

Hello, from the Marketing and Communications Department! We have officially completed week two of the COVID-19 emergency closure, and while these are challenging times, we know that we will all get through this together.

The Communications Department's goal is to provide up to date information regarding the COVID-19 pandemic in Washtenaw County and the State of Michigan as well as details on how it affects Ypsilanti Community Schools. We will continue to send emails, phone blasts plus websites and social media updates full of information that we feel is important to share with staff, families, and the community.

As a district, we ask that you allow the YCS Administration and Communications Department to be the first to share important information with families and communities to ensure the message is succinct. The YCS-all or any building-all email groups should only be utilized by YCS Administrators and Building Principals unless otherwise specified by a direct supervisor.

Please continue to check your email for important updates in the coming weeks as we prepare for the possibility of more extended closures.

The district continues to be asked about donations and the needs of our students. We are accepting donations of school supplies at the Ypsilanti Community High School dock on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday from 9a-2p. The donor **should not** enter the building or have direct contact with any employee (social distancing) but leave the supplies on the dock with a note as to whom it is from and contact information. We are no longer accepting food donations, and those should be directed to Food Gathers, who has been an exceptional help during this emergency closure.

Lastly, please remember that there is a [Washtenaw County Order](#) that was put in place on Thursday, March 26, 2020, at 6 pm that only allows essential workers to be out and about in the community unless for specific necessities. Please know that all YCS buildings will be closed with a notice on the door, and appropriate documentation from YCS is required to volunteer and work. Please see my previous email outlining these critical details.

Be well, and stay safe!

Taryn Willis — Marketing and Communications Coordinator



“Courage doesn’t always roar. Sometimes courage is the quiet voice at the end of the day, saying, “I will try again tomorrow.”– Mary Anne Radmacher



Facilities

While YCS remains closed, we ask that staff follow the directives set forth by the Governor, Center of Disease Control (CDC), The Washtenaw County Health Department, and our Superintendent as we work together to combat COVID-19. The YCS Facilities department and its staff have been identified as essential workers and we will continue to maintain the vital operations of the district grounds and facilities. We have taken steps to put the district into dark mode to conserve energy. We have been making

rounds to ensure safety, security and proper building functions are in order.

Facilities will continue to follow the directives of our leadership team, including staying at home when expected, working remotely when appropriate, and working on site when it is determined to be essential to the operations of the district.

Currently, YCS Facilities department is working with our central office to create a plan, when and if it is needed, for staff to access the building for the purposes of securing materials necessary and essential for the education of our students. This plan must also incorporate the newly released health department guidelines to protect essential workers ([linked here](#)). Screening of essential workers is paramount to the safety of all. Under the Washtenaw County Health Department guidelines, once it has been determined that a staff member MUST enter a YCS facility, they must be screened. The Health Department screening consist of three questions:

1. Do you have any symptoms of fever, cough, shortness of breath, sore throat, or diarrhea?
2. Have you had close contact in the past 14 days with an individual that has been diagnosed with COVID-19?
3. Have you travelled via airplane internationally or domestically in the last 14 days?

If you answer yes to any of these screener questions, you will not be allowed to enter our facilities. Please be sure to follow all health and safety guidelines and orders enacted by our local, state and federal governments and as always, be safe YCS!

Aaron Rose — Director of District Operations

Food Service

This week has been busy with preparing and distributing meals for our six sites. In two weeks we have distributed over 37,000 meals to the students of our community. We are thankful to all of those volunteers that have stepped up and helped feed our kids.

We would like to give a special thank you to Carmisha Bell, Crystal Fuller, Mark Coleman, and Timothy Perry. These staff members have committed their time for the entire week, taken the lead in making sure food is being produced, gone to sites to provide guidance, and delivered meals. Behind the scenes, we have an amazing group of food service staff and volunteers who have continued to show their love for our community.

If you are interested in volunteering, food distribution is expected to continue beyond spring break and it is anticipated that we will need additional volunteers at that time, please sign up using this [link](#) if you are interested in participating.

Tiffany Houston — Director of Food Services



“Problems are not stop signs, they are guidelines.”-

Robert Schuller



**SAVING
LIVES**



Transportation

Thank you to all of the transportation staff that signed up for Saturday CPR & First Aid training. Your willingness and cooperation speak volumes to your commitment to your position and dedication to the district and community. Unfortunately, this event and many others were canceled and will need to be rescheduled for a later date. Thank you to the staff who have already provided your updated CPR and First Aid certificates!

Authorizations for DOT recertification physicals were mailed to your home addresses. Please don't be alarmed. This information was sent so that you will have it when you need it. Please note that it is advised that you call ahead to schedule your visit as many businesses are seeing people by appointment only.

We have two drivers registered for Beginning Bus Class through Wayne RESA, if this training is canceled, you will be contacted individually.

It is important to remember to check your district email for important updates and information at least once a day if possible. If you are having difficulty logging into your email, please reach out to someone in the transportation office for information and support.

Kim Searcy — Director of Transportation

Technology

Hello YCS, during this unprecedented time, technology has been hard at work planning for a possible extension of school closures beyond April 13th. First, I would like to thank everyone who participated in the [surveys](#). We are consolidating that information to assess the online access of both staff and students with technology needs at home. We are planning pick up days for district laptops to those staff members who need them. We are also pushing ahead with purchasing Chromebooks for our students grades 3 and above and collecting all district iPads for distribution to our students in grades PreK through 2 and special education students. This will effectively allow the district to become a 1 for 1 device district. Once the equipment that was ordered comes in, we will work with building administrators on a distribution plan for our students. Instructions and dates will be released soon for when these devices will be available for pick up.



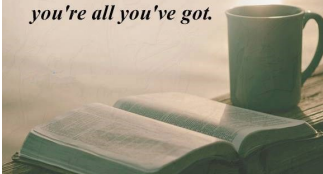
If you are struggling with the Internet at home, please utilize [this](#) information. It is a list of all the vendors in the area that provide internet services. In addition, there is helpful information about cellular carriers; as they may be used as an Internet hotspot (please keep in mind if it is not a part of your plan, then charges might apply. Please contact your service provider for details). Clark has also put together some helpful information on using Google Hangouts in both [video](#) format as well as a [document](#).

And lastly, if you do require technology assistance please continue to use the ticketing system. If it is more urgent, you can email techsupport@ycschools.us. This email is monitored (and the ticketing system) by technology staff, and we will do our best to provide continued support. Please stay safe and take care!

Nik Jackson - Technology Director

TAKE CARE OF YOURSELF.

Go for a walk, eat your favorite food, get a haircut, cry if you need to, read a book, take a vacation, have a drink. Do what you need to do. Take care of yourself, because at the end of the day, you're all you've got.



We will continue to keep you informed of developments in our departments twice a month. Please watch your email for the next issue.



SAVING LIVES