

7 Lions Lane
Camden, Maine 04843

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Maria Libby
Superintendent

Debra McIntyre
Assistant Superintendent

September 24, 2018

Dear Parents,

For a number of excellent reasons, we are going to pilot a new idea this year. We are calling the idea, "Remote School Days." We plan to designate two days this winter as Remote School Days on what otherwise would have traditionally been a Snow Day. Our intent is to have students engage in meaningful learning at home, hence the word, "remote". We think it is time to be innovative when it comes to schooling. After all, in a 2016 Gallup poll, 43% of employees reported working remotely - it is likely that many of our students' futures will include working from home or from a coffee shop. Furthermore, we believe this will result in less disruption to learning and it will help us optimize the investment we have made in technology. Many states are already implementing this practice. If it works, this idea will enable us to avoid excessive snow days and not have to extend the length of the day or go too far into June.

We plan to implement Remote School Days during what would be the first two snow days after December 1, unless there is a blizzard or very heavy snow where we anticipate losing power. We recognize there will be places where we stumble, and we are prepared to adjust as needed. Very few innovative ideas are like well-oiled machines when they are first introduced, but we wouldn't have progress without the necessary messiness inherent in trying something new. Nonetheless, we have planned and anticipated as best we can and the planning continues as I write. We are looking to parents to help support our efforts and work together to adjust any issues that arise.

A team of K-12 district teachers met over the summer and developed a plan appropriate for each grade span. I have attached the general outline of what a Remote School Day will look like at each grade span. I have also included an FAQ document we created to answer anticipated questions. Undoubtedly there will be more. We have not rolled this out to students yet, but it is fine to share the idea with them. They will get more information this fall from their teachers. Both school boards have approved a district pilot of this idea.

At this point, we do not intend to have a school cancellation announcement on the news or local media for the "Remote School Days." Local media has limited choices for how to designate the day when we call in a Snow Day and a Remote School Day is not one of them. I think it would be confusing if we go that route unless they can adapt to meet our needs. Instead, we will rely on our internal messaging system (phone, text, and email) to notify parents (between 5:30 - 6:00am as usual) that it is a "Remote School Day," where students will do their learning from home. Prior to these days,

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students will be well informed about the plan for their learning. For the youngest grades (K-4), we will send home “Genius Bags” for each student after December 1. Students in grades 7-12 will access lessons virtually through Google Classroom (CRMS) or Schoology (CHRHS). Students in grades 5 and 6 will be given work ahead of time by their teachers.

We expect full student participation to the extent that it is possible, and if we don’t get normal participation rates, we will need to go back to extending the school year, extending days, or attending school on Saturdays. After the pilot this year, we will resume our normal snow day procedures for the rest of 2018-19. If it works well, we hope to continue using it in the future as a strategy to reduce snow days.

We will be doing a student survey this week or next to determine which students in grades 7 – 12 do NOT have internet at home. We are going to seek funding to supply those homes with a cellular internet connection through a company called Kajeet. It will provide internet access (filtered) that will enable students in that situation to work remotely. This service would continue during the remainder of the school year as a step toward greater equity.

If you have questions, please email your building principal, me, or our Assistant Superintendent, Deb McIntyre.

Best,
Maria Libby, the Superintendent of Snow. ☺