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May 8, 2020

Dear Parents,

It's Teacher Appreciation Week, and now is the perfect time to recognize the incredible work of New York's wonderful educators. I've been so inspired by teachers' resilience as teaching changed completely overnight. If you're still looking for ways to thank a teacher this week, the National PTA has flyers, thank you cards, certificates, and social media graphics that you can use to help show your appreciation. You can also check out these customizable digital thank you cards from Google for Education or share your stories on social media of amazing things your children's teachers have done during this crisis.

As part of Teacher Appreciation Week, I also want to thank you, the parents who became teachers overnight as a result of school closures. I know that you are going above and beyond to keep your children engaged in education during this time while also balancing many other priorities. Thank you so much for all your efforts.

In addition, it is National Nurses Week, and we recently celebrated School Nurse Day! We appreciate all of New York's school nurses who care for students and promote learning by helping to keep children healthy. School nurses play an integral role in our schools, and we are grateful for their knowledge, care, and professionalism.

We all continue to work hard to overcome challenges as the state, nation, and world have made monumental adjustments to daily life in order to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic. For our part, the Board of Regents and the New York State Education Department (NYSED) have been hard at work maintaining crucial services for students, P-12 schools, colleges and universities, professional licensees, adult education programs, cultural institutions, and the people of New York State. At this week's Board of Regents meeting, I gave an update on NYSED's response to the COVID-19 situation.

Chancellor Rosa and I recently announced that in the coming weeks, the Board of Regents and NYSED will form a statewide task force to guide the reopening of our schools. The task force will be made up of educational leaders, including superintendents, principals, teachers, parents, school board members, and other stakeholders. Although New York State schools will be closed for the remainder of the academic year, we will work together with these partners to ensure that our children's educational, developmental, and overall wellbeing is considered during the important discussion about the future reopening.

This week, the Board of Regents adopted a second series of emergency regulations to provide important flexibility for educators, students, and professionals to address issues due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The Board adopted the first series of emergency regulations at its April 2020 meeting.

We have been in constant communication with our stakeholders throughout the pandemic listening to the challenges they are facing. With this package of emergency regulations, we are building on the amendments passed last month that will continue to allow schools, students, and professionals much-needed flexibility while they respond to this evolving and unprecedented situation. A full summary of the second series of amendments is available in this week's news release.

I know that we're all making every effort to stay connected with each other and to continue helping our students learn during the statewide school closure. You can visit our *Staying Connected* web page to see some of the inspiring examples of emotional support, equitable solutions, and instructional practices that are being used to stay connected with students while schools are closed.

If you're looking for resources to keep your children learning at home, you can check out our Continuity of Learning website, PBS educational programming, and the NYS Museum's Online Resources and Activities Portal, which includes its virtual field trips. We also continue to share daily ideas for high-quality resources, guidance, tips, and activities that can all be used for at-home learning as part of our #NYLearnsRemotely campaign on social media.

Another way to keep your kids learning at home is to join me for story time! Encourage your elementary students to watch this video to hear the book *What Do You Do With an Idea?* written by Kobi Yamada and illustrated by Mae Besom. Reading with children has many cognitive, social, and emotional benefits. When children read to themselves or when they are read to, they develop a stronger vocabulary and a range of knowledge and skills that lead to reading success. Reading also strengthens social emotional development by providing children with a greater range of words to use to describe their feelings and a stronger emotional toolkit. Let's keep kids reading each day while they are at home.

In the spirit of staying connected, NYSED also recently collaborated with the Partnership for After School Education (PASE) to present a virtual My Brother's Keeper (MBK) Village Meeting. The 405 participants included Board of Regents Chancellor Betty A. Rosa, Regent Lester W. Young, Jr., Interim Commissioner Shannon Tahoe, NYSED staff, New York City Department of Education Chancellor Richard Carranza, along with his leadership team, and district administrators and staff from our 25 MBK communities. The meeting's focus was on the Needs, Deeds and Impact of the 2018, 2019, and incoming 2020 MBK Fellows, and many of our talented MBK Fellows shared selected stories of their trials and triumphs during the COVID-19 crisis.

Through the New York State My Brother's Keeper (MBK) initiative, schools and communities work to eliminate opportunity gaps facing boys and young men of color so that all students can reach their full potential. We continue to spotlight our 2019 MBK Fellows on social media. Follow us on Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn to check out our #NYSMBK posts and learn more about these exceptional young men.

I appreciate your continued support, and I hope you encourage other parents to sign up for our parent email list so we can all stay connected during this time. And moms, I hope you enjoy your Mother's Day.

Sincerely,

Shannon Tahoe
Interim Commissioner

STAY CONNECTED: