

March 24, 2020

Dear Otis School District Parents, Students, and Families;

The district's extended closure is raising a lot of questions and uncertainties. Unfortunately, due to the nature of this global event, there are more questions than answers right now.

In the hope, however, of providing some guidance and direction, we've written the following Question and Answer document. Please read through these Q & As and email us any additional questions you may; we'll work to find answers to your questions and send future correspondence as answers become available.

Otis School District R-3 administration and staff want you to know we're all in this together and we're here to help in any way that we can.

Sincerely,

Michelle Patterson - Otis PK-12 Principal

Bryce Monasmith - Otis District Superintendent

Questions and Answers

~ Prepared for you by Otis Administration 3-24-2020

Q: The school building will be open Tuesday, March 24th from 4:00-5:30pm for my child to get his/her belongings. Why?

A: Individuals left the school building on March 12th for Spring Break. No one knew then that the school would have an extended closure, and not everyone took everything they might need or want. During this brief time on Tuesday, students should come to the school and gather their personal and academic belongings. In order to be able to fully disinfect and clean the school as much as possible, students are asked to completely clear their lockers / cubbies, the locker rooms, and classrooms of all personal belongings. Students are also asked to take all academic materials (ie textbooks, notebooks, art boxes, issued Chromebooks and their chargers, etc) so they have these materials at home for remote learning opportunities. **NOTE:** When in the building on March 24th, all students and families are asked to carefully look through and take home personal items from the LOST and FOUND table; unclaimed items will be donated.

Q: My child has some Library and Bookmobile books; what should we do with those?

A: Please return all Library and Bookmobile books when you are in the building March 24th. Reading is very important! Several eBooks and other reading opportunities are available via technology if you don't have books at home you can read.

Q: IF the Emergency Closure extends to summer break, how will my child(ren) get the school's textbooks / materials checked back into the school?

A: Like so many things right now, there is not a definite answer to this question. Right now, school personnel feel it is more important for your child to have all of the learning materials they can at home for as much learning as possible. Of course, district-owned materials will need to be properly stored and cared for, and returned when requested, but please make use of these valuable resources at home during this extended closure.

Q: I feel like I'm in the dark about all of this stuff; where do I get information?

A: **It is extremely important you ensure your Infinite Campus (IC) account has all of your contact information -- specifically cell phone numbers and email addresses.** Without this contact information in the IC system, there is a strong chance you will be missing important communications. In settings on your IC contacts, click as many notification options as you are comfortable with; right now, I'd say more communication is better than not enough -- click it all. (Smile!) Another super resource is the district website - www.otisr3.com; there's a lot of info there, including valuable links like IC, Calendar, and even remote learning resources (go to www.otisr3.com, click <Resources>, then click <Remote Learning Resources.> Now is a great time to explore this site and stay connected. Finally, perhaps one of your greatest communication resources is your child's teacher or any school staff member. Reach out; we are here to help.

Q: When and how will my child receive their suggested learning activities?

A: Teachers are already spending time planning for what to offer your child during this Emergency Closure. Students should expect to hear from their teacher(s) by Monday, March 30th and Learning Opportunities will "roll out" Tuesday, March 31st.

Q: What does "roll out" of Learning Opportunities mean?

A: It really just means you should be hearing from your classroom teacher (for elementary-aged students) or your child's core content /or assigned teacher (for students in grades 6-12). Focus for the Learning Opportunities should be on Core Content (English Language Arts aka ELA, math, social studies, and science), but Elective learning opportunities may also be provided. Remember, you and your child can pick and choose what learning looks like in your home; anything and everything you do will make a positive difference in your child's learning.

Q: Are Otis teachers grading the "learning opportunities" they are sharing out?

A: Learning opportunities offered to students beginning Tuesday, March 31st will NOT have any mandates attached to them (ie no turn-in dates, no grading requirements, no online class participation requirements). Students are encouraged to engage in the activities in order to maintain and/or enrich their learning, but no other requirements on students and families will be made at this time. *The EXCEPTION to this are CDLS, Concurrent, and Credit Recovery classes -- Students already enrolled in these classes should continue with the assigned lessons, activities, and course requirements to earn grades for credit. Any adjustments to this plan will come from the college and/or school district administration.*

Q: How much time should teachers and students spend on academics each day?

A: Organizations already familiar with home-based and online learning formats recommend elementary age children only needing 1-2 hours of school per day, middle schoolers 2-3 hours, and high schoolers 3-4 hours. In addition to these academic recommendations, it is also suggested students spend 1 hour outside each day, at least 20-minutes reading each day, and plenty of time with family members working on projects together like cooking a meal or playing a game; these activities have lots of learning opportunities already embedded in them!

Q: I'm worried I won't be able to help my child with their learning; is there something the school can do to help?

A: First, school staff recognize this is a stressful time for all of us. Staff don't want to make it worse by having you stress about school. You can share concerns, ask questions, or request specific help from any of your child's teachers -- just send them a quick email. Staff should typically have availability to respond Monday through Friday 7:45-3:45. All school emails follow the same email pattern: firstname.lastname@otisr3.com. Reach out -- They'd love to hear from your child(ren)!

Q: Will anyone else be reaching out to our home during this closure?

A: All teaching staff are encouraged to make contact with each of their students at least once every two weeks. How teachers manage this will be left up to them. Some may call your child at a set time on a set day of the week. Other teachers may send a weekly email to check-in on your child. Some teachers may decide to set up specific "office hours" when you can call in with any questions or celebrations, or just to visit! If your child is in grades 6-12, he / she can also expect communication from their Class Sponsor on a regular basis just to "check in" and also to continue with any class "business" that may be needed.

Q: I heard the school is providing meals; how can my children get these meals?

A: Food service for Otis R-3 students will begin Monday, March 30th. Meals will be "to go" and will be available at the pickup / drop off area at the main school entrance (South door) from 11:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. Monday-Friday. Please call the school at 970-246-3486 ext 125 as soon as possible and leave a message if you want your child/children to receive meals, free of charge. For additional information please visit www.Otisr3.com or call Otis' head cook Susan Ehrman at the number listed above.

Q: There is extra worry and stress in our household right now; how can the school help?

A: This is uncharted territory, and many families are challenged right now with creating a "new normal" and just getting through the days with some sense of normalcy. If your family, or your student, is needing some support through this time, please don't hesitate to reach out to either school counselor; they are both available to help. Here is contact information for both of these counselors:

Shae Smith - Otis R-3 School Counselor - shae.smith@otisr3.com - 970-630-7329

Morgan Burke - Otis R-3 School-Based Therapist - morgan.burke@otisr3.com - 970-445-4575

Q: My child had therapy sessions with Ms. Burke before this closure; are those supports still available?

A: Yes. Morgan Burke, Otis School District's School-Based Therapist, has moved her private practice to teletherapy during this global health crisis. She's offering these sessions to students as well. If any student is feeling like they need to talk some things out, work through this transitional period, or address really anything at all, Ms. Burke (and Mrs. Smith) can help to provide some support to all Otis students free of charge to the families. Ms. Burke will be offering both video sessions as well as over the phone options - whichever clients are more comfortable with and fit best with their needs. Please contact Ms. Burke at 970-445-4575 (call or text) or email her at morgan.burke@otisr3.com. Ms. Burke is also posting resources and articles that may be of use supporting mental health needs during this time to her private practice Facebook page *Hope on the Horizon, LLC*, and would be happy to provide these same resources to families via email if Facebook is not accessible; please contact Ms. Burke if you would like to be added to this email correspondence.

Q: Is it likely we will be able to return before summer dismissal?

A: District staff (and others) are hopeful school may resume again before summer dismissal. At this time, however, there is no indication one way or another.

Q: Are the grades students had when they left for Spring Break their final grades?

A: Teachers should have all assignments given before Spring Break graded and reported in Infinite Campus. (If you are a teacher and you do not have this done, do so ASAP! This would include marking all “missing” assignments as Missing.) Starting March 31st, teachers should communicate with and support students who have missing or unsatisfactory work (assigned prior to Spring Break) to achieve acceptable, passing grades for each of the student’s core content classes. Remember: Learning Opportunities provided during this time of Emergency Closure do NOT come with any mandate (ie grading).

Q: If Emergency Closure continues past April 17th, what will that mean for the rest of the academic year and all of our usual end-of-year activities? Prom? Awards Banquets? Concerts? Fundraisers? Graduations?

A: Again, many of us wish right now that we could see into the future and have solid answers for this and other questions. The reality is, there currently is no indication on an end date for our present global pandemic situation. The best answer that can be offered at this time is: (1) academic expectations may be adjusted throughout our Emergency Closure based on lessons learned, (2) large district events like prom, awards banquets, concerts, fundraising activities, and even graduation may be scheduled for a later date or possibly cancelled altogether. Please remain patient as we navigate through these unknowns, and know that decisions on these events will be made with the best possible outcome for all involved.