



March 20, 2020

Dear Portland Public Schools families and community members,

I am writing to inform you that the Portland Public Schools is extending our school closure timeline, due to the community spread of COVID-19 in Maine. Instead of closing for two weeks, we will now be closed until April 27th, the Monday following spring break. All of our facilities, including Portland Adult Education and the Portland Arts and Technology High School (PATHS) will be closed to the public.

Our remote learning procedures and meal distribution program, which started March 18th, will continue during this extended closure. This extended closure also includes our April break, scheduled to begin on Friday, April 17 and run through Friday, April 24. This will continue to be a school vacation.

When I announced our initial closure plans on March 14, I cautioned that it was possible the closure would extend beyond a two-week timeline. As the number of COVID-19 cases in Maine continues to rise and there is evidence of community transmission of the virus, it has become clear that our original two-week closure is insufficient to help keep our students and staff safe. Depending on circumstances, it's possible that this time period may need to be extended.

I also will stress again that this latest decision has been made with careful consideration. Closing schools is a hardship for all families, particularly for our most disadvantaged community members. However, we believe this extended closure is necessary to protect everyone's health.

This crisis has required us to launch a massive experiment in homeschooling with little notice and time to prepare. We recognize that virtual learning cannot replace the everyday experience of being in school, particularly for our least advantaged students, including our students with disabilities, students who are English language learner (ELL) students and who are homeless. However, everyone at PPS is committed to providing students with the best learning experience possible under these unprecedented circumstances. I ask for your cooperation and support as we strive to be an educational constant for our students during this difficult time.

To increase access to our meal program, we are no longer requiring families to have their children present to pick up meals. Also, we are adding Portland High School to our other eight meals sites as of today. We continue working to get tech devices into the hands of families who still don't have them. Please look for communications from your child's school on distribution details.

[Our PPS COVID-19 \(Coronavirus\) Information Center](#) on our website is updated regularly. You can find the latest news, announcements from me and other resources, including an article on social distancing at that site.

You can use our HelpDesk phone line and email for families to get answers to their questions and concerns on any issue during the shutdown. The phone number is: 207-874-8159. That HelpDesk phone line has access to different languages. You can also send us an email in your primary language at ppshelpline@portlandschools.org.

Please be safe. I will continue to communicate regularly with our families during this closure.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'X Botana', with a horizontal line extending to the right.

Xavier Botana
Superintendent

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