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**SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLS**

Karen D. Clarke



**An 'A-rated' District**

*"We are committed to the success of every student!"*

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April 20, 2020

Dear Alachua County Public School families:

I don't think any of us are surprised at the decision by Governor Ron DeSantis to keep schools closed for the rest of the 2019-20 school year. I know we all have mixed feelings about this. Of course we'd like things to go back to normal as soon as possible, but we also have to do what's necessary to protect the health and well-being of students, staff, families and the general public.

The Governor has also said that distance learning will continue through the end of the school year, which for Alachua County Public Schools will be May 29. To support distance learning, the district has already given out nearly 3000 devices to families who don't have them. If you still need one, please contact your child's school directly. Of course, paper packets are still available to those families that want them.

For students without Internet access, we've also launched our School Bus WiFi program. We're sending buses equipped with free Internet 'hot spots' into 45 neighborhoods across the county Mondays through Fridays. You can find more information about this program at <https://www.sbac.edu/Page/29852>.

We continue to provide free meals to all children aged 0-18. In fact, by the end of this week we expect we'll have given out more than half a million meals since schools closed! To find a meal site near you, go to [www.yourchoicefresh.com](http://www.yourchoicefresh.com).

With schools now physically closed for the rest of this school year, I know you have a lot of questions. Will graduation ceremonies still be held? What about summer school or the summer Extended Day Enrichment Program? When can we pick up yearbooks or the belongings my kids left in their lockers? How do we drop off textbooks or devices at the end of the year? How do we register our kindergarten students for the next school year?

We are currently working through these and other issues. Of course, a lot will depend on the course of the COVID-19 virus, orders about social distancing and other factors. For example, we don't yet know if we will be able to hold graduation ceremonies when we'd originally planned. But we are committed to having them, even if it has to be later in the summer. We're also looking at other ways we can honor the Class of 2020, who've been through so much.

As soon as we have answers to these and other questions, we'll share them with families through our School Messenger system, social media and in other ways.

In the meantime, I want to thank all of you for your patience and flexibility during this difficult time. I know that the role of co-teacher is challenging with everything else that's going on these days. Please know that our teachers and principals are committed to supporting you and your child. I'm certainly very proud of them *and* of our food service workers, bus drivers, and all the other district employees who are working so hard to educate, feed, and provide other services to our students. While we'd rather be with your kids in person, please know that we are with them in spirit and continue to have their best interests at heart!

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Karen Clarke". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Karen Clarke, Superintendent  
Alachua County Public Schools