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## Pine-Richland transitions into home learning

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WITH CLASSROOMS EMPTY, PINE-RICHLAND OFFICIALS GEAR UP FOR EXTENDED HOME LEARNING.

BY 11:28 AM, KAREN PRICE

Saying this is the time to lead and not the time to wait for a magic wand, Pine-Richland superintendent Brian Miller lauded the district's efforts in transitioning students out of school buildings and into home learning this week.

Pine-Richland announced the closure of all its school buildings for at least two weeks about an hour prior to Gov. Tom Wolf ordering schools across the states to shut their doors in order to reduce the spread of the coronavirus on Friday. Members of the staff and faculty, including teachers, paraprofessionals, counselors and others, worked throughout Monday to put together plans, and students began working on "bridge" assignments on Tuesday. By

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“Not many school districts in Allegheny County or the commonwealth are immediately transitioning into an instructional model that will provide continuity to families, ” he said. “And even though there are a number of questions that we and every other agency don’t know the answers to, I don’t believe that waiting for answers to questions that no one knows the answer to is the best way to prepare our students and our community for continuity of learning.”

Miller credited the district’s proactive approach in contingency planning, which started several weeks ago. He also praised Allegheny County Health Department medical epidemiologist Dr. Kristen Mertz for working so closely with districts including Pine-Richland as they monitored the situation.

Finding a way to deliver instruction remotely to all students at all grade levels, including those with disabilities and special needs, is not simple, Miller said. It requires a fundamental shift on all levels but they are working hard to lessen the stress on families and get students learning again.

“We are committed to finding ways to meet the needs of every student, ” he said. “If ever there was a time to test our commitment to the mission of every student, every day, it’s coming up with continuity of operations in a global pandemic and providing routine, consistency and stability when everything else around the home, the family and the child is filled with concern and anxiety.”

Miller added that as soon as they get approval from the Pennsylvania Department of Education they will begin offering takeout breakfast and lunch to those students who qualify under the free and reduced-cost meal program.

Families should, however, plan for a shutdown of longer than two weeks.

“We don’t know what will happen but there is a very real possibility — and I shared this with parents (Monday), not to alarm or create anxiety — but there is a very real possibility that four weeks, six weeks, eight weeks, even the outside possibility of not returning to school during the 19-20 school year. We just don’t know. But what we are excited about from a focus on the student perspective is how can we make the best of it for our students and families and workforce in this situation.”

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