

# UNIONTOWN AREA SCHOOL DISTRICT

205 Wilson Avenue  
Uniontown, PA 15401

Telephone: 724-438-4501  
FAX: 724-437-7007

District Website: [www.uasdraiders.org](http://www.uasdraiders.org)

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Mindy Harris  
Curriculum Coordinator K-12  
Ext. 1653

**Dr. Charles D. Machesky**  
**Superintendent**  
Ext. 1606

Kelly L. Swartz  
Special Education Coordinator K-12  
Ext. 1609

Sally Matthews  
Business Manager/Federal Programs  
Ext. 1643

**Dr. Daniel Bosnic**  
**Asst. to the Superintendent**  
Ext. 1606

Robert D. Smalley  
Director of Buildings and Grounds  
Ext. 1652

David A. Winfrey  
Director of Transportation  
Ext. 1624

**Miss Jaclyn S. Blackson**  
**Board Secretary**  
Ext. 1606

Donald M. Gmitter  
School Police/Truancy Officer  
Ext. 1611

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August 12, 2020

Dear Uniontown Area School District Families:

At the regular meeting of the Uniontown Area Board of Directors on August 3, 2020, our Superintendent, Dr. Charles Machesky, recommended that our district utilize a full remote learning model for the first nine weeks of the 2020-2021 school year. Dr. Machesky's recommendation was not made in haste; rather, many hours of research, collaboration, and deliberation occurred where each option was examined in depth by our district's administrative team and the benefits, concerns, and risks of each potential learning model were explored. In the end, our Board of Directors chose to prioritize the health and safety of our staff and students and voted unanimously to institute a full remote learning model for the first nine weeks.

First and foremost, it is important that our parents/guardians understand that the remote learning model that will be implemented in the fall will look drastically different than the emergency remote instruction that was followed during the fourth nine weeks in the spring. Our administration and teachers have worked diligently to research and adopt a top-of-the-line online learning tool for our students, which is the Canvas Learning Management System. Canvas is used all over the country in K-12 schools, colleges, and universities. Furthermore, our district purchased Apple iPads for each and every student, which are powerful devices that have the capability to facilitate interactive educational experiences beyond a simple web browser. When used together, these technology tools provide an educational experience that is as close as one can get to face-to-face instruction, without the risk of spreading a virus.

Our teachers began their professional development training within Canvas in June where they participated in a course from a student's perspective to learn how to utilize the platform. They are also provided with 24/7 access to the training portal which houses an array of professional development videos and courses. During the week of August 10-14, teachers will devote their time to create their online courses and continue to acquire an in-depth knowledge of Canvas and its endless possibilities.

It is our sincere hope that the plan of action that we have developed will make the remote learning experience in the Uniontown Area School District successful for all of our students.

Below is an overview of what our parents/guardians and students can expect over the course of the next several weeks.

1. We want our parents to rest assured that our teachers will be utilizing the same curricular materials that they have used in the past, but delivering the instruction virtually through Canvas. Students will still have their textbooks available to reference both online and offline.
2. Building principals will be contacting families with specific dates and times of iPad and textbook distribution. At those designated times, each student will receive an individualized schedule that will include a detailed list of online classroom meeting times. Students' schedules will follow the exact same sequence as if they were face-to-face. If students are unable to be present online during the regularly scheduled class times, the live sessions with teachers will be recorded so that students may view them at their convenience.
3. In order to offer support to our parents/guardians, we will be hosting live, virtual Canvas training (more information to come). Additionally, there will be a parent support line that parents may call during the hours of 7:30 - 4:00, Monday through Friday.
4. Incoming Kindergarten students will have individual orientation times scheduled in their home buildings. Our guidance counselors will be in contact with all incoming Kindergarten families to schedule the orientation sessions. The official first day of Kindergarten will begin remotely via Canvas on September 8, 2020.
5. Student attendance will be monitored by their daily log-in to Canvas. Students are not required to be logged into Canvas at a certain time of day. Students will be expected to complete work daily. Attendance for students without internet will be monitored on an individual basis by our attendance team and will be given extension on due dates if needed.
6. Our administration is working diligently to assist families that do not have internet access. We recently partnered with QCOL and Atlantic Broadband internet providers. Additionally, each district building will be equipped with WiFi "hotspots" to allow our students to access the internet. If your family does not have internet access at home, please call your child's school as soon as possible. A district representative will take your information and work with you to find a solution.

The Uniontown Area School District is determined to do whatever we can to make certain that all of our students are successful as we embark upon this new way of teaching and learning. Our district is "Committed to Educational Excellence," and we appreciate the support of our parents/guardians, students, staff, and community members as we work together to fulfill that responsibility.

Sincerely,

Uniontown Area School District Administration Team