

April 2, 2020

Good afternoon,

I hope this message finds your family healthy and safe. Last weekend, I messaged our community regarding our remote learning expectations and protocols during the extended school closure. We understand that this is an unprecedented time in our community, state and nation and our plan prioritizes the physical and emotional health of our students and their families.

The Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) issued guidelines for school districts pertaining to remote learning plans. Whitman-Hanson has developed a Remote Learning Plan that follows these guidelines and made adaptations to fit the needs of the students in our district. This Plan is a living document and may be revised as we navigate this closure. This Plan is not specific to every child or teacher. We have created a Plan for the district as a whole. While this Plan attempts to address every situation possible, we realize it simply cannot.

Tomorrow, you will receive correspondence from your building principal. Their letter will outline what remote learning will look like for your child throughout this closure as well as the expectations of our teaching staff. Our Plan breaks down the expectations for elementary, middle and high school. Some general details include time on educational tasks and what material is going to be covered. Our district Plan recommends, elementary students engage in school related activities 2 to 2.5 hours per day, middle school students 2.5 hours per day and high school students 3 hours per day or the equivalent of 30 minutes per class. Elementary and middle school students will focus on mastery of material and standards that have been covered already. There will be no formal assessment or grading for the work presented. Feedback and communication with teachers will measure the student's engagement. At the high school level, material is going to be reviewed, and when applicable, new material will be added with a credit/no credit method of assessment. Again, feedback and communication with teachers will be key methods of assessment. I want to stress that remote learning activities will be both traditional and non-traditional.

The District will be providing students with remote learning opportunities, which may include analog materials, telephone calls, video conferencing, and other online services. Students are expected to participate in these supports and complete activities and assignments provided. Please reach out to your child's teacher or principal if you anticipate or become aware of any issues with your child accessing the remote learning opportunities.

It is best for students to maintain a sense of routine. During this closure, students should engage in the educational opportunities provided by their teacher and complete the activities and assignments.

We ask everyone in our school community to recognize that video conferences and other online services will be taking place in the homes of educators and students who participate in the calls, and to be mindful of everyone's right to privacy. To that end, we remind our students to dress appropriately and choose an appropriate location in their home from which to participate in any and all remote learning opportunities, particularly those with a video component. Parents/guardians should take all precautions to safeguard personal or private information that they do not wish to be disclosed. In accordance with state and federal laws, including the Massachusetts Wiretapping Act and FERPA, parents and students must refrain from recording any and all remote lessons. Exceptions may be made on an individual basis due to special circumstances, and only with the consent of everyone involved in the lesson. In addition, parents/guardians are permitted to observe online instruction in a non-disruptive manner.

We expect our students to behave in accordance with school rules of conduct while participating in remote instruction. Cyber-bullying, harassment, discrimination, and abuse of the remote learning process will not be tolerated and may result in suspension from remote learning, as well as additional consequences when school resumes. The District also encourages its staff and students alike to limit disruptions to remote lessons to the extent feasible (while also recognizing the sometimes pets, small children, and technical difficulties cannot be prevented from disrupting a lesson that happens at home).

Special education teachers, ELL/SEI teachers, and individual service providers will be in contact with parents/guardians of students with pre-identified specialized learning needs. Please understand that in these unique circumstances, IEP services will be provided differently than when school is fully operational. The focus of these services will be to support student's access to materials through providing modifications and accommodations and the focus will be on maintaining skills rather than learning new content. You will be hearing regularly from your student's special education liaison and team of specialists, who remain committed to working with you and will continue to be available to assist you and answer any of your questions. By accessing these services, the District recognizes that you and your child consent to access online instruction and agree to fully comply with the requirements of this letter.

In closing, please continue to practice social distancing, take good care of yourselves and we hope to see you on May 4!

Jeff Szymaniak  
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