



Haverhill Public Schools

Office of the Superintendent

3/28/20

Dear Staff and Families,

I hope you are all well and staying safe during this challenging time. We have completed our second week of school closure due to the Coronavirus. I know how disruptive this has been and I thank you all for your hard work and creativity. As educational leaders across the state and the country struggle to find a responsible educational path forward in this new landscape your efforts to provide learning options and more importantly to offer structure, normalcy and relief from isolation will be recalled by our children in years to come as they recount these difficult days.

As you know Haverhill's initial plan for school building shut down was scheduled until this Monday, March 30th, with the Governor's guidance we lengthened that dismissal to Monday April 6th. We now have been told the building closure will last until at least May 4th, 2020. We do not know how the pandemic will progress or whether the closure will be extended again.

As the situation continues it is important that we calibrate our work across departments and schools. This does not mean that every school or every teacher will do the same thing, as we all have different teaching objectives, comfort levels with technology, and different personal situations. We know that we can't replicate the engagement or rigor of the classroom or expect that we will be able to cover all the content or skill development remotely. However, we can support our families and students in both the academic and social-emotional arenas and enable them to make progress toward the learning targets we had hoped to achieve. We know our teachers, our students, and our families are all adjusting to this new reality and are working to manage life at home and taking care of one another.

It is important to note that during the first phase of the closure from March 16 to April 3, the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) did not consider the activities that we offered our students to count toward time-on-learning. As the closure is now extended DESE has changed their guidance and requested, we move toward what they are terming a Remote Learning Model, below is a brief overview of the DESE guidance (<http://www.doe.mass.edu/covid19/>)

Recommended remote learning model:

- *We recommend that districts support students to engage in meaningful and productive learning for approximately half the length of a regular school day. We*

expect this learning to take place via a combination of educator-directed learning and student self-directed learning.

- We strongly recommend that districts and schools focus on reinforcing skills already taught this school year and applying and deepening these skills*
- The individual student experience will vary*

Definition and scope of remote learning:

- Remote learning can encompass a wide variety of learning opportunities*
- Examples of remote learning tools include large-group video or audio conference calls, 1:1 phone or video calls, email, work packets, projects, reading lists, online learning platforms, and other resources to effectively engage with students. privacy standards.*

Components of a remote learning schedule:

- 1. Opportunity to connect with one or more educators multiple times per week.*
- 2. Access to multiple hours per day of academic content directed by educators,*
- 3. Time each day for physical activity*
- 4. Additional daily time for enrichment activities such as the arts*

Feedback on student work and grading:

- To the extent practicable, teachers should provide feedback on student work completed at home. That said, if districts and schools have not already implemented policies regarding credit-bearing courses (determining credit for academic work at home), we strongly recommend that academic content be graded as “credit/no credit”*

Many, if not most of HPS staff have already begun to provide online morning meetings, lessons and activities for our students. As a school district we will spend the coming week considering this new guidance and adapting our approach to provide students greater structure, more regular connection with teachers and classmates, and introduce new content that is important for their continued success. This second phase will begin on Monday, April 6, 2020, in order give our staff the time to prepare.

We are thoughtful about issues related to equity and addressing the needs of all students as we plan. Our coaching, interventionist, special education and English learning staff are working hard to support the greatest possible access to all students in this unprecedented time. We are being balanced and thoughtful in expectations of students and staff understanding the limitations and emotional toll this pandemic is having on our families and our community.

Over the past year we have greatly improved our access to technology across the district, and are fortunate to have devices to deploy to families in need so that all can access the online portions of the curriculum. A survey is currently out to review technology availability in each home, based on these results we will begin the

distribution of Chromebooks to those in need next week. Technology assistance will be available to all families, details to follow.

We have no doubt we will learn as we go, and we appreciate your continued patience during this very challenging time. Communication will be key, if there is an issue, a problem or a misunderstanding please let us know directly so that we can fix it promptly if at all possible. We will make mistakes; this will not be flawless.

Additionally, I could not be prouder of our food services team who continues to serve over 1,000 lunches and breakfasts per day to hungry children at our 5 sites (Consentino, Nettle, Hunking, YMCA, Boys & Girls Club).

As I said at the beginning of this message, this is new terrain for all of us. We have much to learn in the coming months. We will call on all our educators to be their most creative and open to new learning. I have confidence that working together with you, our families, we can make a difference for our students at this very difficult time. Thank you for your patience and support.

Sincerely,

Margaret Marotta EdD
Superintendent of Schools