



March 19, 2020

Dear Westwood Families:

We hope that you are doing well as we all navigate this uncharted time in education and society.

During challenging times, we are reminded how important it is to be part of a community. With that community spirit, our faculty and staff have worked hard over the last few days to create a plan for all of us to move forward together. Our highest priority is to support families and students during this extended closure. We hope that the information that follows will ensure that students, parents, and teachers have common expectations about how we will move forward for the next two weeks while school is closed.

We have devised a plan for the continuation of students' learning for the next two weeks shaped around two goals:

- to promote school connectedness and foster a sense of community, and
- to keep learning alive for students by providing important opportunities for review, learning activities for applying and extending previously learned core concepts, and feedback on student work that promotes growth.

Clearly, it isn't possible to replicate the face-to-face learning experiences that our teachers typically deliver. We can, however, use a remote learning model to provide continuity and stability for students. Beginning Monday, teachers will be providing students with alternate learning activities to review and consolidate key concepts and skills students have learned this year and provide opportunities to extend learning and apply skills in ways that will be valuable when we return to school.

The goal during this next time period is to "keep learning alive" so that we're in good shape when school resumes. For the time being, we are suspending grades and credits, though teachers may provide feedback on anything students share electronically while out of school. This approach is in line with the guidance that districts have received from the MA Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (MA DESE).

How will remote learning work?

Our approach to remote learning will include a balance of online and off-line activities and will be different with different age students. Some learning opportunities may be *synchronous*, such

as a class meeting through Google Hangouts Meet. Most learning opportunities will be *asynchronous*, meaning that students can complete assignments or participate in activities on their own schedule.

Preschool

Preschool teachers will be posting a menu of enrichment opportunities for our youngest learners on our [Continuation of Learning](#) webpage. In addition, teachers will be communicating directly with families about online opportunities to stay connected and engage in social emotional learning experiences.

Elementary

Teachers are working to create a suggested schedule of core content learning activities for the next two weeks. This schedule will be posted by Monday morning on the district's [Continuation of Learning](#) webpage. In addition, art, performing arts, physical education, and library teachers will provide ideas for creative and movement activities.

Teachers will communicate via email about specific opportunities for virtual experiences for their classes, such as online class meetings, virtual read alouds, etc. Teachers will also let parents know about opportunities to submit student work for teacher feedback.

Students in grades 3-5 may also connect with their class through their Google Classroom site. Teachers will post materials and connect with students through this portal. Students should know how to access Google Classroom by logging on to their Chromebook. There will also be resources for parents about Google Classroom on our Continuation of Learning webpage.

We encourage students to participate in activities to the extent possible in your family. We recognize that parents are attempting to balance many responsibilities from home right now. If you can't get your student online for a particular activity or aren't able to supervise an art project, it's not a problem. Flexibility is our motto these days!

Middle School and High School

Middle school and high school teachers will be posting learning activities via their Google Classrooms (or for some high school classes, Canvas). Students should be familiar with how to log into these systems using their school login credentials. Teachers will be using tools such as Google docs, screencasts, and Google Hangouts Meet to provide learning activities and interact with students. Some activities will be designed for students to work independently. Other activities may suggest that students work in virtual groups.

Our Performing Arts, Visual Arts, and Wellness teachers will also be providing ideas and resources to support students' social, emotional and physical health via our [Continuation of Learning](#) website.

Teachers will be re-establishing contact with students via email by this Friday and will be posting activities and assignments to their Google Classrooms (or Canvas) by Monday morning.

We encourage students to participate in learning activities to the extent possible in their circumstances. Again, we recognize that parents are managing a variety of challenges right now. Rest assured, we are not expecting you to homeschool your students! We do ask that you communicate to your child your expectations for their daily schedule and participation in school over the next two weeks.

How often will teachers be available for questions?

At all levels, teachers will be available to students through scheduled check in opportunities either with the whole class, groups of students, or individual students. This strategy will allow teachers to connect virtually with students and be available for questions that students may have. Teachers will communicate their schedule via Google Classroom and/or email.

Students and parents can also reach out to teachers via email. Teachers will do their best to respond within 48 hours.

What is the plan for Special Education and Student Services?

There is a lot to cover on that topic. This [letter from the Student Services Department](#) is meant to provide answers to some of the key questions.

How can parents best support students' learning?

Our [Continuation of Learning](#) webpage (still evolving) will contain some suggested daily schedules for students. These schedules are provided as resources only and can be modified to meet the circumstances of your household. We suggest that you have a conversation with your child about your expectations for them during this period and ask them what they will need from you to support their continued connection to school.

If your student is in grades 3-12, ask them to show you their Google Classroom (or Canvas). You might establish a daily check in where you both look at the Google Classroom to think about a plan for the day.

This situation is a big change for everyone. We will need to remind students that we are all adjusting to a different context and that it will take time to figure things out. Please reassure students that our only expectation is that they try to stay engaged with their teachers and, to the extent possible, participate in learning activities. We hope that you will encourage students to stay positive and give things a chance to unfold.

Teachers and counselors are available to consult with parents. Principals and department heads are also available. Feel free to contact them via email.

What about counseling supports?

Our counselors and psychologists remain available to support students during this uncertain time. They will be checking in with students by phone and Google Hangouts Meet. Students and parents/guardians can also reach out to them via email to set up a time to talk as needed.

What about MCAS?

The MA Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (MA DESE) has not informed us yet about the plan for MCAS. Clearly, with schools closed statewide, we're all in the same situation. I'm sure that DESE will provide further clarity soon. We will communicate that information to you when we have it.

What about AP classes?

Like all other classes, AP teachers will be providing resources and materials for students to review and use. The College Board is also developing resources to help schools during extended school closures, as well as a solution that would allow students to test at home, depending on the situation in May. As with so many things, the plans may change. We will continue to carefully monitor the guidance and decisions of the College Board.

What about spring sports?

The MIAA just informed districts that spring sports will not begin until Monday, April 27th. Our Athletic Director, Mr. Gillis, will keep students and coaches informed about athletics.

How can we access tech support?

If you need tech support, please email wpstechsupport@westwood.k12.ma.us. This email will be monitored during regular school hours. In the event that your concern can not be resolved remotely, we have established [onsite technical support](#) by appointment only.

What are we hearing from our public health officials?

Closing school is incredibly disruptive. Our public health officials remind us that the purpose of the school closure is to “flatten the curve” and slow down the spread of the coronavirus. Unless we all earnestly adhere to the guidelines for [social distancing](#), the closure will not have the desired effect. In particular, our local public health officials ask everyone to refrain from accessing shared playground equipment and to implement the 6 ft. social distancing recommendation. Let’s all do our part.

We recognize that this is a difficult time for students. But, we know our students well and we are confident that they will rise to the moment. As parents, you can help us to keep students connected to their teachers and their peers.

It will take a couple of days to get a sense of this new rhythm for learning and understand how it will work. We will all be learning, adjusting, and getting a sense of what is possible if the closure were to extend beyond the current timeframe.

We’re all working together! Thanks, as always, for your support.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Emily J. Parks".

Emily J. Parks
Superintendent