



WESTWOOD PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Honoring Tradition, Inspiring Excellence, Shaping the Future

EMILY J. PARKS
Superintendent of Schools

MARCH 29 UPDATE FOR FAMILIES

March 29, 2020

Dear Westwood Families:

I hope you had a good weekend. Let's hope for sunny weather this week. The ability to get outside has never seemed more important!

On Friday, the Commissioner of Education released updated guidance to schools pertaining to the extension of the school closure until at least May 4th. As you know, when the school closure was initially announced through April 7th, we implemented a plan for a 2-week increment using the guidance that the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) issued at the time: that schools should engage students in meaningful and productive learning opportunities that focus on reinforcing skills already taught this school year and applying and deepening these skills. However, with the extension of the closure, DESE has said that districts may move forward with new content and instruction, including implementing special education services to the extent it is safe for students and staff to do so.

Therefore, beginning on Monday, April 6th, the Westwood Public Schools is moving into a new phase. Students will be expected to engage in classroom activities and assignments and will learn new content. At the middle school and high school, that means that required course work will resume and students will again be working for course credit.

As we have acknowledged before, a remote learning model can never replicate a school day. This situation is new to all of us, and we have all learned some important lessons from our first foray into this new environment. As we look to "phase 2," we will be putting new structures in place for kids (for example, attendance expectations and daily routines) that will help students to manage their school responsibilities in this new landscape. The plan at each level will reflect the developmental needs and capacities of different age students. In general, however, students should anticipate multiple hours of required school work related to core academic content each day. This will include both

synchronous learning with teachers and classmates and asynchronous assignments completed independently. The details will be communicated to you by building principals by midweek. At that time, we will also communicate more information about the implementation of special education services.

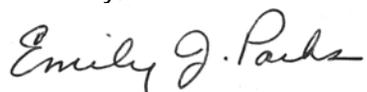
In the meantime, students and families should use this week to make sure they are comfortable navigating video conferencing on Google Hangout Meet and Zoom, understand how to access Google Classroom, and have designated a student workspace that makes sense for your family. **Particularly for students who did not check in with teachers last week, the next few days will be important for re-engaging in school.** It is important to use this period of relatively low stakes to work out the glitches and get used to this new school environment.

By tomorrow morning, teachers will have posted assignments and expectations for this week. For students at the middle school and high school, this information will be on Google Classroom or Canvas. For elementary students, plans for the week will be posted on the district's [Continuation of Learning](#) webpage this evening and reviewed with students by teachers during virtual morning meetings. In an effort to streamline things for elementary parents, in addition to the hyperlinked daily plan, we are also providing one pdf file for each grade that contains all of the printable material for the week. Though we know it doesn't take care of the problem for folks who don't have printers at home, we hope being able to print one file will facilitate things for some people. To get a sense of the scope of the printing issue going forward, [please fill out this form](#) if you have a student in grades K-5 and do not have access to a printer.

Again, let me reiterate that we understand and appreciate how much everyone is dealing with right now. We know that it will take some time to work through challenges. Right now we are all figuring out what is possible and how to manage the multiple demands this situation presents. We know that school provides structure, community, and a sense of purpose for kids and parents, and we're eager to get back to a sense of routine. We are committed to working through this process with you.

Have a good week. Look for details of the next phase of learning in a couple of days.

Sincerely,

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

Emily Parks
Superintendent