



Colchester Public Schools

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Dear Colchester Families,

Here is our weekly update on the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic's impact on Colchester Public Schools. I appreciate that the Governor's announcement (below) to close schools for the remainder of the school year may come as a shock or surprise to you. Through the entirety of this school closure period, Colchester Public Schools has been preparing for this scenario. Please know that our focus is, and always will be, doing our very best to ensure the educational and emotional wellbeing of students.

School Closure Update

On May 5th, Governor Lamont announced that due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, he is ordering in-person classes at all K-12 public school facilities in Connecticut to remain cancelled for the rest of the 2019-2020 academic year and continue providing distance learning during this period. His full statement is here: [Governor Lamont's Press Release](#). Education Commissioner Miguel Cardona announced the Reopen Connecticut Education Team, committed to preparing reopening plans for summer school, as well as fall classes.

Superintendent's School Closure Video

Please see my brief video on the impact of closing the district for the remainder of the year and a simple message of appreciation for our instructional staff. [Superintendent's Message on School Closures](#). Here is a video from Bacon Academy Principal Matthew Peel on how we will complete the 4th Quarter and calculate end-of-year grades. [Bacon Academy End-of-Year Message](#)

Food Security Program

Our meals service will continue to provide meals to any child 18 years of age and younger, regardless of which town or city the child lives or what school they attend. For more information on this program, visit our website: [CPS Food Security Program](#). It is unclear at this time if this program will be continued in the summer.

Plan for Retrieval/Drop-Off of Student Belongings

By Friday, May 15th, all schools will have a schedule and protocol for the retrieval of student belongings left in lockers and gym lockers, and the drop-off of borrowed materials (school supplies, technology, textbooks, library books, uniforms, etc.). This information will be provided from each school directly.

Year-End Events

As the social distancing requirements of the COVID-19 pandemic continue to make planning challenging, decisions on Graduation, 8th Grade Promotion, Proms, etc. are still forthcoming. It is our sincere hope that these special events can still take place, in some way, in the future. However, currently there is too much uncertainty surrounding the decision to lift social distancing practices to allow for the significant and financially binding planning that these events require.

Summer School

Governor Lamont is consulting with state and local education officials regarding whether summer school programming should commence as scheduled. He anticipates having guidance on that matter toward the end of this month.

Special Education

At the May 12th BOE meeting, Director of Pupil Services and Special Education Kathleen Perry will present a summary of distance learning and special accommodations for children who have an IEP or have a 504 plan.

Report Cards and Final Grades for School Year 2019-2020

Each school has illustrated how student performance during a period of distance learning will be reported to families. Please read the section titled Grading in the [Phase III: New Learning](#) letter for more information. Students at Bacon Academy can also [view the video produced by Mr. Peel](#) that describes how grades will be calculated.

Weekly Staff Spotlight: Nurses and Paraprofessionals

I'd like to take a moment to highlight the important work of these two school teams. National School Nurse Day was May 6th. We know that healthy students are better learners, and our outstanding Nurses and Nurse Paraprofessionals coordinate the care between parents, caregivers, and health care providers to ensure better learning. This group of caring professionals is planning for our most important goal: the safe return to schools. Additionally, our Paraprofessionals are crucial team members in the distance learning plan. During the closure, our Paraprofessionals have been working closely with our certified staff in the creation of resources and activities, as well as working directly with students individually, in small groups, and during whole class Google meets. Paras are available to students for extra help, daily check-ins, and for direct reinforcement of skills. I am so grateful for their caring commitment to our students.

2020-2021 Budget Process Update

At the Board of Education meeting on April 20th, the Board voted to revise the 2020-21 budget from a 2.99% increase to a 1.43% increase in light of the current economic situation. In further discussion the BOE has reviewed another revision at a 0.76% increase and is considering a 0% budget for next school year. All reductions to the

proposed budget can be found on our [budget webpage](#) and a full review of the revisions will take place at the next BOE meeting on Tuesday, May 12th at 4:00 (access information on our website). In addition, the schedule for the Town's budget process has been revised in light of the Governor's executive order. Please visit the [Town's website](#) for more information. All documents related to the budget discussions, including the list of proposed reductions, can be found on our [website](#).

For public access to virtual BOE meetings, visit the [Board of Education Website](#). Any questions pertaining to agenda items should be directed to boardquestions@colchesterct.org. Questions must be submitted at least one hour prior to the start of the meeting. Please see the [Town's Budget Page](#) for updates on meeting dates and the process.

Have a question or concern?

- Visit our Frequently Asked Questions and Answers: [Frequently Asked Questions](#)
- **EMAILS**
 - General questions: covid19@colchesterct.org
 - Tech questions: techhelp@colchesterct.org
 - BOE questions: boardquestions@colchesterct.org
- For questions pertaining to a specific school, please email the teacher, administrator, or office staff of that school directly.

Colchester Public Schools is actively planning short-term and long-term for the distance learning that lies ahead. We equally recognize the emotional support our students need now and will need in the Fall. We are all still here for you and your students. Please reach out with any questions or concerns to covid19@colchesterct.org.

Please enjoy the following videos:

- ["A Better Place" Performed by CPS Music Teachers](#)
- [WJMS Video Message to Students](#)

Take good care and stay safe.

Sincerely,



Jeffrey Burt
Superintendent