



Colchester Public Schools

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Dear Colchester Families,

Before I share some important details and school closure updates, I want to acknowledge that this interruption in everyone's lives has families in anxious times. It is our job to see you through this to the best of our ability. Know that we will never lose sight of doing what's best for our students and community. However long this lasts, students will remember this time forever. Please do not worry if you aren't the perfect homeschooling parent; it is just as important to create an environment in your home that is a safe haven during a stressful time. We've included some great resources this week for helping you create a "home school" that also factors in fun family time and the need to do what's most important for your family.

School Closure

We are still officially closed until April 20 by order of the Governor. It is my understanding that we will get more guidance on the status of the remainder of the year on or about April 10. However, we have been told to prepare to be closed for the remainder of the school year.

Bacon Academy Graduation

The agenda for the April 7, 2020 Board of Education meeting will include a recommended graduation date of June 15, 2020. I want to caution everyone to be prepared that an official and traditional graduation ceremony may not take place in the event that the district is closed until the end of the school year. Education Commissioner Miguel Cardona has asked each district to explore alternatives to allow for some type of celebration, and Mr. Peel and his team will be starting this process in the next week or so for graduation and other end of year activities..

Parent Resources and Social/Emotional Wellness

- NPR Article: [How to Turn Your Home into a School Without Losing Your Sanity](#)
- CDC Website: [Managing Stress and Anxiety](#)
- Comprehensive List of Resources for Families and Parents: [Resources for Families and Parents](#)

The Q&A on our website is being updated based upon your feedback. Please continue to review this page regularly: [Frequently Asked Questions](#)

Student/Parent Feedback Request

Please talk to your student about his or her experience online, then complete the following anonymous survey: [Student/Parent Feedback Form](#). This is the same survey as last week, but please feel free to respond again now that students have completed a full week of instruction. The feedback will be used to help us make the student/parent experience even better!

Budget

As of now, our budget process will be delayed and the original presentation to the Board of Finance did not take place on Tuesday, March 31st. Both the Town and the Board of Education budget process can be delayed by 30 days, so we will send out updates once we have a clear timeline and process.

Attendance

If your child is absent from school, please continue to dial the school absence line for each day he or she is absent. Reporting absences informs schools of which students and families might be experiencing challenges during an extended school closure. We will reach out with supports if students are consistently absent from participation online.

Grading, Credits, and Graduation Requirements at the Secondary Level

All of our teachers will continue to assess student performance for the duration of the school closure in order to effectively plan for instruction aligned with student needs. The practice of assessing differs slightly from issuing grades, which have traditionally served as a way to determine promotion or retention of students, placement in courses, and determining class rank. My concern as an educational leader and as a parent is that we cannot guarantee equity of access to the district's instructional offerings to all students during this extended school closure. As a result, high-stakes decisions based upon grades can create inequities for students. A team of administrators and teacher leaders will spend the next week to develop guidance for issuing and reporting grades for the remainder of the year, in particular at the secondary level.

At this time we are still waiting on guidance from the State on course credit, graduation requirements, and high school transcripts. On the last item, the State is working with local colleges on how higher education institutions will approach this extended closure and college admissions. We will send out updates as we get them.

Educational Progress

We acknowledge that learning during this period of closure cannot equate to that of students working with our exceptional instructional staff in person, and that students will not make the same amount of progress as if they were attending school each day. After the April break, and after this initial period of getting used to this “new normal,” the district administration will begin to plan for next school year. We will take into consideration the length of the closure and feedback from instructional staff on how to plan for changes to next year’s curricula and pacing. Our focus has been on how to best train our staff to engage in this new form of instruction, but now we will need to shift our focus to the long-term implications. I have every confidence that our innovative staff will rise to this challenge as well. We will do the best we can, in both the short-term and long-term, to support our students.

Virtual Access to Board of Education Meetings

Board of Education meetings will be accessible to the public virtually via Zoom meetings. All directions for public access will be included on our website’s BOE page here: **[BOARD OF EDUCATION WEBSITE](#)**. The next regular BOE meeting is April 7, 2020 at 4:00PM. Any questions pertaining to agenda items should be directed to boardquestions@colchesterct.org. To have your question read during the Public Comment section of the agenda all questions must be submitted at least one hour prior to the start of the meeting.

If you’re having difficulty, please reach out to your teacher, your building principal, or me (see office hours below). Every single person your student(s) knew in school is still here to help you navigate this period. We are still a community. Attached to this email is a helpful guide for where to direct your questions or concerns.

I will hold virtual office hours next week on Thursday, April 9 so that you can share any thoughts, feedback, questions, or concerns. You may call into this meeting at any time between 3:00PM and 4:00PM and you will be placed in a waiting room:
Mobile phone one touch: **+16465588656,,417922096# US (New York)**
Other phone: **1 646 558 8656 Meeting ID: 417 922 096**

General questions: covid19@colchesterct.org

Tech questions: techhelp@colchesterct.org

Board questions: boardquestions@colchesterct.org

Finally, some fun news to share: [Colchester Teachers Parade in Cars to See Students](#)

Take care and be safe,



Jeffrey Burt
Superintendent