



Colchester Public Schools

127 Norwich Avenue, Suite 202
Colchester, CT 06415

Charles E. Hewes, Ed.D.
Director of Teaching and Learning

Phone (860) 537-7268
Fax (860) 537-1252
chewes@colchesterct.org

April 28, 2020

Introduction

We are excited to announce that Colchester Public Schools (CPS) is planning to transition into Phase III: New Learning on May 4, 2020! The CT Commissioner of Education has continually encouraged school districts to keep the learning going throughout the period of school closure, and up until this point, CPS has proceeded thoughtfully in this process. Phase I: Supplemental Learning occurred between March 13 and March 26. During this phase, CPS provided optional activities for students under the belief that a school closure would be temporary. Phase II: Interim Learning Opportunities began on March 27, whereby CPS started to provide interim learning opportunities via Google Classroom to maintain student's skills and knowledge that had been learned up to the point of school closure. On May 4, CPS will begin Phase III: New Learning, and will introduce new content to students at all levels. Transitioning to this phase will not only fully meet CT guidelines for continuing learning, but more importantly it will provide significant benefits to students. Phase III will:

- Further limit the impact of a loss of instructional time due to an extended period of school closure
- Keep students engaged in learning by introducing new content and skills
- Better position the District to respond to the needs of our families who are increasingly experiencing challenges due to quarantine orders and school closure

Planning for Phase III: New Learning

Knowing that these are unprecedented times, and a digital learning environment creates barriers to learning, the CPS faculty will spend the next week identifying the most essential standards students need to master in preparation for the coming academic year. This is a process we call "compacting the curriculum". The product of this process will be the identification of a reasonable number of essential learning outcomes for students to *learn* by June 15. Compacting the curriculum will not only allow faculty to dedicate time to providing feedback and supporting student learning, but it will also allow faculty more time to dedicate to creating authentic and engaging learning experiences. Faculty of the next grade level/course will also be better able to diagnose individual levels of student proficiency to provide a more personalized learning experience in the coming year. Compacted curriculum documents identifying what students at each grade level/course are expected to learn between May 4 and June 15, 2020 will be uploaded to the Curriculum page on the District website by May 4.

<https://www.colchesterct.org/page.cfm?p=261>

Grading During Phase III

With the introduction of new learning comes the question of grades and grade reporting. Whereas we recognize the need to continue educating students, we also acknowledge that a number of factors impact a student's opportunity to fully engage in distance learning. Therefore, distance learning shall not have an adverse impact on student grades and no student's grade will be lowered during the period of school closure.

It is expected that all students engage in distance learning and complete all assigned work; however, students who are unable to do so, or do not show evidence of learning during the period of school closure will not be penalized with a low grade. Students who do not demonstrate proficiency in standards or are unable to participate in digital learning will be eligible for a variety of supports during or after a period of school closure to assist them reach mastery of the compacted curriculum standards. The type and amount of support will be determined at the individual student level. Our goal is to make sure that as many students as possible are prepared with at least the compacted curricular standards at the start of next year.

Teachers at every level will assess students on their performance towards mastering compacted curricular standards. Performance reporting will be used to a) monitor growth in a student's performance level, b) monitor student engagement in an online setting, c) provide students with information on their progress toward learning goals, d) determine individual student short-term (during school closure) and long-term (post school closure) academic needs. It is important that students submit only their own original work to teachers to ensure the faculty can determine a student's need for individualized support. The District has provided guidelines to schools, and each school's leadership team has determined how student performance will be reported as a grade.

Colchester Elementary School & Jack Jackter Intermediate School

- During the period of school closure, teachers will provide on-going feedback to each student based upon progress aligned to compacted curricular standards
- Traditional report cards will not be issued for the 2019/20 academic year
- By June 15, teachers will communicate with parents the strengths of each student in regard to the compacted curriculum standards
- Participation and student performance will be shared with the next year's grade level teacher

William J. Johnston Middle School

- During the period of closure, teachers will provide on-going feedback to each student based upon progress aligned to compacted curricular standards, and they will use the following rating scale to indicate levels of student performance:
 - 4 = at or above expectation
 - 3 = moving towards expectation
 - 2 = below expectation
 - 1 = unable to assess or there was limited/no participation
- **Final grades** will be calculated by averaging a student's grades from the first 3 quarters. Students will be given the opportunity to raise their **year-end grade** based upon 4th quarter work. Students with a year-end grade between 60 and 100 will be promoted to the next grade level. Students with a year-end grade below 60

will be provided extra supports. If a student does not engage in extra support, he or she may be retained.

- Rating of 4 in quarter 4 = Final grade + 10 points (Maxed out at 100)
- Rating of 3 in quarter 4 = Final grade + 5 points (Maxed out at 100)
- Rating of 2 in quarter 4 = Final grade
- Rating of 1 in quarter 4 = Final grade
- To be eligible for promotion, any student with a rating of 1 during the 4th quarter will be required to complete the provided extra support or retention may occur
- Traditional report cards will be issued for the 2019/20 academic year

Bacon Academy

- During the period of school closure, teachers will provide on-going feedback to each student based upon progress aligned to compacted curricular standards
- The following rating scale will be used to indicate levels of student performance during quarter 4
 - 4 = Proficient with distinction
 - 3 = Proficient
 - 2 = Approaching proficiency
 - 1 = More evidence needed
- **Final grades** will be calculated by averaging a student's grades from the first 3 quarters and the midterm exam. Students will be given the opportunity to raise their **year-end grade** based upon 4th quarter work.
 - Rating of 4 in quarter 4 = Final grade + 10 points
 - Rating of 3 in quarter 4 = Final grade + 5 points
 - Rating of 2 in quarter 4 = Final grade
 - Rating of 1 in quarter 4 = Final grade
- To earn credit for a course, a student must have a passing year-end grade and a quarter 4 rating of either a 2, 3, or 4. Students who receive a quarter 4 rating of 1 and complete extra supports will earn credit for a course with a passing year-end grade.
- Traditional report cards will be issued for the 2019/20 academic year
- Class rank and GPA for 2019-2020 will be calculated based upon 2019/20 Semester 1 grades
- Student transcripts will include year-end grades only

FAQs for Parents

1. What is Phase III: New Learning, and what does that mean for my student?

Between March 13 and March 26, Colchester Public Schools (CPS) provided supplemental learning opportunities for students under the belief that a school closure would be temporary. Following the Governor's orders and guidance from the Educational Commissioner, CPS began providing interim learning opportunities via Google Classroom that reflected the skills and content that students had learned up to the point of school closure. At the time this document was written, a return to school for students is planned for May 21. In order to align ourselves with the Commissioner's guidance, and to prevent a significant loss of learning, CPS will begin teaching new skills and content to students online beginning May 4, 2020. Knowing that these are unprecedented times and a digital learning environment creates barriers to learning, the faculty

have identified only the most essential skills and knowledge students will need in preparation for next year. Faculty will be planning around modified curricular learning objectives and providing authentic and engaging instruction for students between now and June 15, regardless of whether students return to school on May 21.

2. What if my student can't engage in interim learning opportunities during a period of school closure?

We understand that these are unprecedented times, and that there are a number of reasons families may not be able to support their student(s) engage in interim learning opportunities. If a family believes they will be unable to support their student engage in learning during a period of school closure, we ask that the family communicate this to their student's teacher(s) as soon as possible. There are a number of supports/accommodations the District/school will provide to assist students continue their learning. If, after exhausting all options, barriers still exist that prevent a student from engaging in online learning, the school will develop a learning plan that will, to the greatest extent possible, support that student to re-engage as soon as possible to prevent a further loss of learning.

3. How will my student be graded during Phase III?

Please refer to each school's regulatory language around grading on pages 2-4.

4. What will my students need to do in order to pass/earn credit?

All students are expected to fully engage in interim learning opportunities facilitated via online learning. All elementary students will be promoted to the next grade level, with the exception of those students previously identified through ongoing communication between families and the school. Secondary students will pass a course and/or earn credit based upon the aforementioned system of grading. Teachers will provide all students with on-going feedback on assignments and will make recommendations at the end of the year (June 15) for additional support to best prepare each student for the next school year.

5. What is the standard for "passing"?

Teacher teams will identify a reasonable number of standards for all students to master between now and June 15, a process we refer to as "curriculum compacting". In some cases, the number of standards selected will be significantly fewer as compared to a time of non-school closure. Teachers will monitor student performance towards these standards and provide ongoing feedback to students and families on student progress. The District will also modify next year's standards to accommodate for any loss of instruction during a period of school closure.

6. What opportunities will my student have if they don't "pass" or if he or she struggles with distance learning?

Students will be held-harmless if they are unable to fully engage in interim learning opportunities, or are unable to meet the standard for the modified curriculum learning objectives prior to June 15. The District and schools will provide as many opportunities as available to support each student meet the

compacted curriculum standards. Opportunities might include summer school, tutoring, back-to-school kick-off programs, intervention services, or other programming that meets the needs of students.

7. How will this grading system impact college applications?

The CSDE has worked closely partners in higher education - the University of Connecticut (UConn), the Connecticut State College and University System (CSUS), and the Connecticut Consortium of Independent Colleges (CCIC), which represents certain private colleges and universities – to reach consensus and provide the following guidance on grading School Year 2019-20, for students applying to or enrolling in Connecticut colleges or universities. This guidance does not reflect grading policies for public and private colleges outside of Connecticut. For the semesters which are taught through continued educational opportunities outside the school house Connecticut’s public and private institutions of higher education will accept the following principles:

- Pass/Fail grades will be accepted for Connecticut high school students taught through distance learning for the semesters in which in-school classes are cancelled.
- For the 2019-2020 school year, the student Grade Point Average (GPA) will be calculated based upon performance while students were in-school classes, through the time when in school classes were canceled during March 2020.
- For current seniors, a student’s GPA will include grades earned through December, 2019.
- Underclassmen GPAs will be calculated based on grades earned through December, 2019, and those earned beginning when classes resume for the 2020-2021 school year.
- For a year-long course, a student’s GPA will include the fall term grade for the course.
- Colleges and universities in Connecticut will accept electronically certified transcripts from districts for newly enrolled freshmen, and will extend the deadline for receipt of officially certified transcripts.

8. How will GPA/class rank be calculated?

GPA/class rank at Bacon Academy will include only the 2019/20 semester 1 grades. Due to standards-based methods of grading in World Language courses, grades earned in these courses will not be factored into the GPA calculation for 2019/20.

9. Will there be final exams at WJ/BA?

There will be no final exams during the 2019/20 academic year.

10. How will my student be accommodated during school closure?

During this period of school closure, students will be supported by their special education and Section 504 providers. These specialists are working with their general education colleagues in order to assist them in designing learning opportunities that incorporate individual student accommodations and modifications. Please reach out to your student’s case manager if you are finding

that your son or daughter may need additional supports during this time. The district is committed to working with you and your student so that they can best access learning at this time.

11. How will my students' services as outlined on their IEP be implemented?

During the school closure, special education teachers and related service staff will work in collaboration with the general education teachers to implement student's individualized education plans to the greatest extent possible. Special education staff have been in contact with families and students to meet them where they are and to provide support and services as outlined on their individual plans. The special education staff are working closely with families to meet each student's individual needs. Please reach out to your student's case manager should you have any questions or if additional support is needed.

12. What will ESY services look like this summer?

At this time, the district is planning for ESY as if we will be in school and as if we will continue to engage in distance learning. As the situation continues to evolve, we will be providing staff and families with updates. At this time the state has made no determination as to whether or not schools may reopen for ESY.

13. What will learning "look like" next year?

Faculty will be modifying standards for the 2019/20 academic year. They have been instructed to identify the most essential skills and knowledge students will need in preparation for the upcoming academic year. As a result, the next year's curriculum will also be modified to accommodate for the adjustments made as a result of school closure in 2019/20. Additionally, some students who experienced barriers to participating in interim learning opportunities during a period of school closure may receive additional support to get them "caught-up" at the start of the academic year.

If you have any additional questions or concerns, please email covid19@colchesterct.org with **Phase III** as the subject.

Please take good care and be safe.

Sincerely,

Charles E. Hewes, Ed.D.
Director of Teaching and Learning
Colchester Public Schools