



# *Colchester Public Schools*

127 Norwich Avenue, Suite 202

Colchester, CT 06415

*"We create innovative thinkers for a dynamic world"*

**Jeffrey E. Burt**  
Superintendent of Schools

Phone (860) 537-7208

[jburt@colchesterct.org](mailto:jburt@colchesterct.org)

March 20, 2020

Dear Colchester Families,

Thank you for your continued flexibility and understanding during this exceptionally challenging time. As promised, every Friday we will update you on the Colchester Public Schools' response to the evolving COVID-19 situation. There has been new guidance from the State Department of Education, and a number of executive orders and directives have been issued to assist us in making decisions that are in the best interest of our learners and community.

Here are important updates on our ongoing initiatives:

## **School Closures**

Governor Lamont has closed all schools in Connecticut through Tuesday, March 31, 2020. We anticipate that this closure may extend significantly beyond March 31st. In addition, the Governor has waived the annual 180-day school day requirement, and the position of state officials regarding the last day of school has also changed over the past few days. At this time, we are now planning to return to our original school schedule which calls for the last day of school on Monday, June 15, 2020. We are simultaneously preparing for a much longer closure, with the possibility of closing for the remainder of the school year (see "Educational Continuity Plan and Distance Learning Opportunities" below).

## **April Vacation**

At this point, the status of the April vacation break is yet to be determined, although it is likely that it will remain in place.

## **Educational Continuity Plan and Distance Learning Opportunities**

Our instructional teams have been working together diligently to ensure that the needs of all students, including students with IEPs and 504s, are addressed. We expect further guidance from the State Department of Education next week on how we can best address the needs of students with disabilities.

Recently, the Commissioner of Education has encouraged districts to shift from "supplemental learning" to "distance learning." Our team has been working and will begin training teachers next week to prepare for interim learning opportunities for all of

our students. As this is a new way of learning for both our students and staff, this plan will not be perfect, but we have been encouraged by the Commissioner to offer programming as soon as possible. As we continue to work on learning opportunities in the coming weeks, please know we will continue to improve interactions with our students.

Prior to moving to regular distance/online learning, our goal has been to provide supplemental learning opportunities that are listed [here](#), or can be found on the district's COVID-19 Information/Update webpage. We intend to provide every student with distance or online learning opportunities provided by our expert educators beginning by March 31 or sooner, which will give our staff sufficient time to develop this program. If your home is not equipped with wireless internet access or your student does not have a device, please complete this [survey](#). I will send out specific details on this program and exact start date as we get closer to the end of March.

### **Food Security Plan**

This week, we implemented a Food Security Plan. Please complete [this survey](#) if you intend to participate in this meals program so that we may plan accordingly. Our Food Services team is preparing bagged breakfasts and lunches for Colchester K-12 students for pick up at Bacon Academy. The pickup location is in front of the auditorium doors between 9:00am-11:00am only, Monday through Friday.

The following protocol **MUST** be followed for the safety and consideration of our food service staff who are providing this valuable service:

- Line up in cars in front of the auditorium at Bacon Academy.
- **PLEASE DO NOT LEAVE YOUR VEHICLE OR ENTER THE BUILDING.**
- Wait in your vehicle with your **trunk or rear door open** and the attendants will place the meals in your vehicle. Staff will **not** place meals in an open front window.

Thank you for your understanding and cooperation. Any updates to this process will be communicated on the Colchester Public Schools website ([colchesterct.org](http://colchesterct.org)) and through emails from Superintendent Jeffrey Burt. We are exploring the possibility of meal delivery. If you are unable to pick up meals at Bacon Academy, please email Leanne Ranheim at [lrnreim@colchesterct.org](mailto:lrnreim@colchesterct.org).

### **Access to Public Meetings**

The continuation of public access to Board of Education meetings is of the utmost importance. New Executive Order No. 7B suspends the requirements that public agencies hold open meetings and permits public agencies to hold such meetings or proceedings remotely by conference call, videoconference or other technology on the condition that the public must have the ability to view or listen to each meeting in real time, by telephone, video, or other technology. To this end, we have set up [freeconferencecall.com/wall/colchesterlive](http://freeconferencecall.com/wall/colchesterlive) for public access. In addition, all BOE meetings will be recorded and posted on our website within 7 days of the meeting or proceeding; The notice and agenda will be posted on the Board's website with information about how the meeting will be conducted and how the public can access it;

any materials relevant to matters on the agenda will be submitted to the agency at least 24 hours prior to the meeting and posted to the agency's website for public inspection prior to, during, and after the meeting; and all speakers that take part in the meeting will clearly state their name and title, if applicable, before speaking on each occasion that they speak.

### **Buildings Status**

All Colchester Public Schools facilities are closed to the public until further notice. However, there will be an opportunity on **Monday, March 23, 2020 from 9:00AM - 12:00PM** to pick up any necessary materials or instruments. Please call ahead to the main office of each building to describe what needs to be picked up and the item will be brought out to the front door. For the time being, school and central offices are open for phone calls or questions. No visitors please.

### **State Testing**

The State of Connecticut has applied for a waiver of all state testing. We will communicate the outcome of that waiver request.

### **Spring Sports Update**

Following an online meeting with nearly 70 school, athletic and governmental leaders, the Connecticut Interscholastic Athletic Conference (CIAC) "reached a consensus that canceling the entirety of the spring sports season is premature at this time. There is a strong desire to provide student athletes some spring athletic experience if possible. Any plan for spring sports will need to adhere to the guidelines from the Governor's office, Department of Education and health experts regarding the potential reopening of schools to establish a specific time frame."

### **Website Updates**

[HERE](#) is a link to Colchester Public Schools website page on Coronavirus communication.

### **Email**

For questions and concerns, please email [covid19@colchesterct.org](mailto:covid19@colchesterct.org)

As always, if you are not able to access any of this information or need additional help please call the main office of your child's school or call Central Office, 860-537-7267.

The next comprehensive update will be sent by the end of the day on Friday, March 27, 2020. I am proud of the Colchester Public Schools staff and teachers who have approached this challenge with the utmost level of dedication to providing continued educational opportunities for all of our students. We will continue to work through this difficult time period as a united school community. Thank you again for your continued support.

For a bit of levity, community members practicing "social distancing" can take a self-guided history tour of Colchester by downloading and using the PocketSites smartphone app. The app was created by students and faculty at the William J. Johnson Middle School, with content from the Colchester Historical Society. Take a self-guided tour of Colchester's historic center on your own schedule! Download the PocketSights app and select the "Colchester Heritage Walk."

I wish you and your family the best of health as we work together to face these unprecedented challenges.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jeffrey Burt", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Jeffrey Burt  
Superintendent

**SURVEYS:**

Food service needs: [SURVEY](#)

Wireless internet capability and available devices: [SURVEY](#)

Supplemental learning opportunities: [LINK TO CPS WEBSITE](#)

**RESOURCES:**

[Managing Anxiety Around COVID-10](#)

**ATTACHED: Stay Calm and Reduce Fear in the COVID-19 Pandemic**