

STONINGTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS

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March 20, 2020

Dear Parents and Families,

I am sure you will agree it has been an interesting week with new challenges every day as we settle into a “new normal” daily routine. Many of you are not only adjusting to having your children home during the work week, but also dealing with the realities of working remotely yourselves or even being out of work because of the COVID-19 outbreak. We empathize with the very real stresses this situation places on families across the district, state, country and globe. In designing our new distance learning framework we very much kept these factors in mind and intend on partnering with you throughout the transition and beyond to deliver the best instructional experience for your children.

Our administrative and curriculum teams have been working diligently to prepare teachers and related service providers to implement our new Stonington Distance Learning Plan. All teachers, both general education and special education, worked virtually today under the guidance of the curriculum team to review the district’s online learning plan that will go into effect on Monday, March 30th. The school day will run from 8 a.m. - 3 p.m. for all students and teachers. That does not mean your child or their teacher is expected to be “online” or on a device for the entire school day. We have established an approximate daily instructional time for each grade band:

- 2 hours/day for grades K-2
- 2-3 hours/day for grades 3-5
- 4 hours/day for grades 6-8
- 3.5-4 hours/day (varies because of course load) for grades 9-12

These instructional hours do not have to be consecutive. We are sensitive to the needs of our students and are being deliberate in how much screen time and off device learning is appropriate for each grade level. The plan also allows for families to have flexibility as to when their child will be participating in their learning. It is a blended model of pre-recorded direct teacher led instruction with off-line practice and assignments/projects. Teachers will have scheduled real time meetings during the week to provide online support to students and families. Our related service providers and counselors will also be scheduling “real time” sessions with students. Beginning Monday, March 23rd our teachers will start to plan lessons for the transition into the virtual classroom model with the support of the curriculum team.

Next week we will release a guideline document for parents and families which will include specific schedules for online learning support, supplemental resources to support learning at home, and clarification on the expectations of students, teachers, and families in this delivery model. In addition, we will publish a schedule for K-5 students to pick up their devices at Stonington High School next week. Students from Stonington High School who are in need of securing a device to access the curriculum will also be scheduled either at the end of next week or the beginning of the following week.

The Commissioner of Education, Miguel A. Cardona, has given districts permission to keep the school calendar in place which means April vacation will remain intact and the last day of school this year will remain Friday, June 19, 2020. The state has applied to the United States Department of Education for a waiver of all state assessments this year. Communication with the Connecticut State Department of Education and the Governor’s Office occurs on a daily basis. As of today, we will operate remotely for an indefinite period of time. Should directives from the state change that plan in any way we will share those updates with you immediately.

We are also working closely with the Connecticut State Department of Education Special Education Office to receive guidance on how to best meet the needs of students with disabilities. State updates in this area are coming in on a daily basis. We are working on a model to provide students with virtual access to special services and related services staff, in addition to their virtual participation in the general education program. Our existing alternative curriculums are being modified for distance learning. Case managers will be reaching out to individual families next week to discuss the plans for each child.

District office staff and school office staff have the ability to remotely check building voicemail messages from home if you need to contact us during weekdays from 8:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m.

If you have not already done so please complete the Student Technology Access survey emailed to you on Wednesday. If you are not receiving emails or alerts, please contact Heather Lebovitz at 860-572-0506 Ext. 2154 at the District Office.

For all the latest information and correspondence related to district updates please visit our website:

www.stoningtonschools.org/family-resources/covid-19-information

Thank you for your continued support in this process. I will update you with changes and new information as it becomes available.

Dr. Van Riley
Superintendent