

Emergency Virtual *or* Remote Instruction Plan

for School Year 2026/27



The South Orange & Maplewood School District believes that lasting excellence begins with clarity and consistency. By strengthening the systems and structures that guide daily operations, we create the conditions for learning to flourish. These shared frameworks ensure that every student, teacher, and family experiences stability, transparency, and trust. This allows our community to focus on what matters most: nurturing each child's potential and preparing them to thrive in a changing world.

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South Orange & Maplewood School District Emergency Virtual or Remote Instruction Plan for the 2026 – 2027 School Year

This plan outlines the South Orange & Maplewood School District's (SOMSD) approach to emergency virtual or remote instruction for the 2026 – 2027 school year. This plan will be activated if the district closes for more than three consecutive school days due to a declared state of emergency, a public health emergency, or a directive from a health agency or officer for a public health-related closure.

Technology Distribution for Virtual Learning

The Technology Department will distribute Chromebooks for the 2026 –2027 academic year. If needed, families can find more information and sign up for appointments by visiting the following link: [Student Devices – 1 to 1 Device Initiative](#)

School Lunch Distribution

During virtual learning, the SOMSD Food Service Department will provide meal pick-ups. All students, including those eligible for free and reduced lunch and any student or family needing food support, are eligible for meal distribution. Meals will be available for pick-up at Seth Boyden Elementary School and Columbia High School between 12 noon and 2 pm on school days.*

Instructional Model

In the event of an emergency district closure lasting more than **three days**, SOMSD will implement an all-virtual instructional model. This model combines live virtual instruction with teachers and classmates, alongside self-paced activities, projects, and assignments that align with state standards.

Virtual Instructional Methodology

All students will participate in daily live instruction for each of their courses. This may include live mini-lessons or instruction, followed by teacher-led small group breakouts and/or independent/investigative work to reinforce new learning. Lessons will conclude with a live session involving the entire class. Daily schedules will also include time for individual or small group conferencing, where teachers will provide tutorials, additional support, intervention services, or time to complete online assignments. Teachers will ensure breaks are incorporated throughout the day, and students will have opportunities for independent work to avoid excessive screen time.

Synchronous Learning (Real-time): Synchronous learning requires all participants to be present simultaneously in a virtual setting. This involves two-way, live instruction between teachers and students. Examples include live interactive

classes, teacher-supported work time during video conference calls, and scheduled online tests.

- **Synchronous Learning Student Expectations:**

- Students will attend school daily on a designated schedule by course, and absences will be documented.
- Students are expected to attend virtual classes on schedule and actively participate as if attending in person.
- Students must adhere to the Student Code of Conduct and the provided Virtual Student Code of Conduct.
- In-person grading and GPA policies, including those for late work, will be in effect.

Asynchronous Learning (Self-paced): Asynchronous learning allows students to engage in instruction at their convenience without needing to be present simultaneously. This method includes self-guided instruction available on-demand, featuring prerecorded video lessons, independent game-based learning tasks, or pre-assigned work and assessments. Examples include self-paced online courses with occasional teacher instruction, pre-assigned work with formative assessments within the district's LMS, and watching prerecorded instructional videos with guided support.

- **Asynchronous Learning Student Expectations:**

- Students must engage in the district's LMS daily to be counted as present, and absences will be documented.
- Engagement is defined as making progress in the district's LMS, progress from teacher/student interactions (phone calls, virtual meetings), or turning in assignments that day.
- Students are required to adhere to the Student Code of Conduct and the Virtual Student Code of Conduct.
- In-person grading and GPA policies, including those for late work, will be in effect.

ML(Multilingual Learners):

Services for Multilingual Learners will be provided in alignment with State and Federal requirements. The District will provide information to families in their home language and use interpretive services to ensure all families have information regarding their child's education. Teachers will provide differentiation to meet the needs of Multilingual Learners, which may include sheltered instruction, the Universal Design for Learning framework, and other methods. Multilingual learners will have access to technology to meet their needs. The district will continue to

provide professional learning for teachers, administrators, and staff on strategies for culturally responsive teaching, social-emotional learning, and trauma-informed teaching, including for students affected by forced migration.

Grades

Grades will be assigned for work completed through virtual learning, adhering to the District's regular grading policy and scale. Grades earned virtually will contribute to student GPAs for high school credit-bearing courses.

Assessment

Students will participate in district-wide local, state, and federal assessment programs as mandated by the New Jersey Department of Education. Assessments will be used to measure student growth and achievement on the NJDOE Student Learning Standards. Assessments will be differentiated and based on the needs of the student. Formative, summative, benchmark, and alternative assessments will be used.

Attendance

Student attendance is crucial, and students must sign in to their the district's LMS classes at their designated times. Per the "Virtual Student Code of Conduct," students must have their video turned on and kept on for the duration of live instruction unless directed otherwise, with their faces visible to the instructor. Teachers will take attendance and submit it daily via PowerSchool, following the District's general attendance policy. If students struggle with attendance, the I&RS team will work with the teacher, student, and family to provide support.

Teacher Expectations

Synchronous Teaching Requirements:

- Daily Instruction: Synchronous teaching must be provided for every period.
 - Live Sessions: Must be live.
 - Content: Introduce new concepts.
 - Engagement: Teacher-led small groups.
 - Conclusion: Close the lesson.

Weekly Instruction Planning

- **Posting Schedule:** The following week's focus for instruction must be posted on the district's LMS by 4:00 pm on Fridays.
- **Grade Updates:** Post grades in the district's LMS and ensure the PowerSchool grade book is up to date by the end of the day on Sunday.

Communication

- **Response Times:** Return emails within 48 school hours to parents and guardians, and within 24 hours to administrators and colleagues.

Additional Requirements

- **Social-Emotional Learning:** Incorporate social-emotional learning and Restorative Practices into classes weekly at a minimum.
- **Consistency:** Keep lesson planning, learning, and pacing consistent with colleagues.
- **Teacher Attendance:** Teachers will sign onto the district's LMS by their daily start time.
- **Staff Absences:** Absences should be entered into the (Frontline) absence management system
- **Professional Development:** Teachers will complete all required virtual instructor professional development courses.
- **Attendance Tracking:** Teachers will take attendance in PowerSchool, marking students absent and tardy as done when in school.
- **Asynchronous Lessons:** Teachers will post asynchronous lessons to the district's LMS.
- **Class Coverage:**
 - A substitute teacher will be assigned to the class.
 - An available teacher will cover the class.

If you experience internet issues, teachers are expected to reach out to the District IT Department.

Special Services

Child Study Team meetings will continue to be held virtually. School Counselors, Social Workers, and Child Study Team members will conduct virtual meetings with students and parents as necessary to ensure services are implemented in accordance with IEPs to the greatest extent possible. Child Study Team evaluations will continue to be conducted in person if possible. Safety precautions and parental acknowledgment of the safety procedures will be sent to parents prior to evaluations taking place.

Related Services, both individual and group, will be provided virtually to the fullest extent possible. In specific instances where IEP goals require in-person OT and PT that cannot be met virtually, services will be provided, if possible, in person at one central school location. The applicable therapists will reach out to parents to discuss service delivery models and scheduling.

Teachers and school staff will ensure that all modifications and accommodations are implemented during remote/virtual instruction to the greatest extent possible. Administrators, teachers, and child study team members will work together to ensure that students with disabilities have access to the materials and technology platforms that are used for instruction. Additionally, teachers will continue to assess students using appropriate measures to monitor student progress toward IEP goals as well as NJ Student Learning Standards.

Schedules for Virtual Instruction by School

- All students will follow their customary building academic schedules. Monday – Friday.
 - If the closure lasts beyond two weeks, alternative schedules will be considered to ensure interventions are emphasized.
- Food service distribution will continue as expressed above.*

Virtual Learning Code of Conduct for Students

Overview:

The SOMSD Virtual Code of Conduct is intended to give our students, families, and staff members clear guidelines for what is expected of our students in a virtual setting. As we navigate our online learning environment, clarity of expectations will set us up for collective success.

General:

Students are expected to comply with the SOMSD Code of Conduct and Restorative Practices document and policies. Behavior online or electronically that fails to comply with the Code of Conduct and causes substantial disruption to the virtual or in-person learning environment may result in appropriate consequences with restorative practices as the lens, mindset, and approach.

1. Upon entering an online class, video should be turned on and kept on for the duration of the class (unless directed or excused by the instructor). A student's face should be visible to the instructor during live virtual sessions. Students will follow class procedures for alerting the teacher/requesting permission to turn off screens for a period of time. Instructors will employ sensitivity to personal matters and available workspaces for students when granting permission to periodically remain off-camera. Instructors will be mindful of the need for managing time on screen, breaks, etc. Screen time will

be used to engage and connect students with the instructor and with one another.

2. School-appropriate attire should be worn while on camera.
3. Students and families are encouraged to remain in contact with school counselors, administrators, and instructors regarding their needs as it relates to access to technology and Wi-Fi. The South Orange Maplewood School District remains committed and available to families in need of additional wireless and device access. The district will send out a survey to families every 8 weeks to determine the technology needs of our district families in order to measure and address any ongoing digital divide issues, including a lack of internet access, network access and/or sufficient access to devices.
4. The device used should be identified by the student's full name, which is the name the instructor will see on the screen. Students may not change their names unless the instructor has provided permission for the child to do so. Students are permitted to use names aligned with their gender identity even if this name is not listed in Power School as per District policy.

Privacy, Data Protection, and Security

1. Taking screenshots or screen recordings of virtual classrooms without explicit permission from the instructor and class members is not permitted. The instructor may choose to record sessions for students to watch remotely or to use for subsequent groups for educational purposes. The instructor will announce in advance if a session is recorded. Recorded sessions may not be distributed to third parties outside the District and will be stored in and made accessible only through District platforms.
2. You may inform your instructor if you do not wish to be filmed/recorded, and can subsequently choose to turn off your webcam. In this case, a student will work with the teacher regarding expected participation.
3. Students may not create or post images of class meetings using screenshots or screen recordings of any member of the faculty, staff, student body, or administration without the express permission of the instructor. Derogatory posts, memes, etc. are not permitted.
4. Students and families will make a concerted effort to protect student privacy above and beyond the efforts of the District. Please be aware that anything done online or electronically is not private and can be monitored.
5. Please do not share personal information, including passwords, online about yourself, family, friends, or faculty.

6. Do not upload or post personal information, private communications, or photos of others without their permission.
7. Do not engage in behavior that puts yourself or others at risk. Students should seek the help of the instructor if they feel unsafe, harassed, intimidated, bullied, or witness unkind behavior.

Appropriate Participation

1. All classroom and school rules apply: Harassment, intimidation, and bullying are not permitted.
2. Students will share any concerns they have about another student with their teacher and let their teacher know immediately if they feel unsafe in a large virtual class or breakout room/small group.
3. While in a breakout room, students are expected to follow all virtual and in-person code of conduct expectations.
4. Please minimize background noise to the extent possible (muting, use of headphones, closed doors, quiet areas, etc.).

Discussion

1. Always use a device in a way that shows consideration and respect. The use of obscene, profane, threatening, or disrespectful language, both while speaking or in discussion posts, chats, etc., is not permitted.
2. Do not disrupt the virtual learning environment in any way. Please remain muted unless speaking, "raise" your physical hand or virtual hand (if applicable in the online platform) to ask a question, make a comment, etc.
3. Communication with students and staff should be of a course-related nature during online sessions.

Academic Integrity

1. Cutting and pasting, copying, or plagiarizing Internet content, work that is not your own, or the work of your classmates is not permitted.
2. Students may not post assessments, assignments, answers to assessments or assignments, or any other curricular materials on any media that can be seen by other students or other third parties.
3. Students may collaborate with peers when the instructor has shared that this is part of the assignment or task.

District Equipment (Chromebooks)

1. Exercise extreme care with District devices including securing the equipment whether it is in use or not in use.
2. Do not leave District devices in a hot or cold environment for an extended period of time.
3. Do not modify or attempt to circumvent security measures on District devices.
4. Do not leave District devices plugged in for an extended period of time. Once the device is fully charged, unplug the device's power cords.
5. Damage or theft to devices or components must be immediately reported to the District.
6. The student shall not, in any way, tamper with or misuse school equipment, either software or hardware. No form of tampering is acceptable.
7. Students may not download copyrighted software, audio or video files, or any other copyrighted material from the Internet not legally allowed to be used. Any such material found will be deleted without prior notification.
8. Only licensed software/apps may be installed on District computing devices. If students require special or non-standard software to be installed on this computing device for virtual learning, the installation must be cleared by the school beforehand.
9. District devices may not be used for any form of personal financial gain.
10. District devices and their contents remain the property of the school. No data stored on District devices are personal or private and the student has no reasonable expectation of privacy in such data. Any application or data (apps, music, etc...) will become the property of the School District upon completion of the program.
11. District devices may record or collect information on the student's activity or the student's use of the device if the electronic device is equipped with a camera, global positioning system, or other feature capable of recording or collecting information on the student's activity or use of the device. If School District equipment is issued to a student for use outside the District, it is possible this collection of information on the student's activity or use of the device may occur outside of the school.
12. The School District shall not use any of the capabilities in a manner that would violate the privacy rights of the student or any individual residing with the student as per. N.J.S.A.18A:36--39 (P.L. 2013, c. 44).

13. Food and drinks should be kept well away from District devices. The student should also take care when shutting down and closing the lid of the computing device (if applicable) to ensure that nothing is left lying on top of the computing device's surface.
14. Students will keep District devices in their possession at all times. They will not give or lend it to anyone except to return it to the School for repair in case it is damaged.

Additional:

Accelerated learning opportunities will be supported with accelerated learning opportunities through differentiation in the classroom. Students will continue to be identified through multiple measures.

Social-Emotional Health of students and staff will be priorities. The HR Department will continue to provide resources through the Monthly CONCERN newsletter. The Special Services Department, guidance counselors, and Counseling Intern program will continue to operate.

Title I programs will support students as they normally do through virtual instruction.

Credit recovery will be provided and aligned to district policy and procedures.

Transportation: N/A

Extra-curricular programs will be provided virtually to the greatest extent possible.