

Dear Holliston Parent/Guardians and Staff:

One week after Governor Charlie Baker closed schools across the state to slow the spread of coronavirus in our communities, Holliston Public Schools rolled out a comprehensive set of Enhanced Learning Opportunities for students to use as a vehicle to get re-connected with their teachers and classmates and re-engage with their academic work.

This past Wednesday, Governor Baker announced that schools would remain closed through Friday, May 1, 2020. Then, the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education released a set of [guidelines](#) for districts to use as they develop plans for this extended shutdown period. On Friday, March 27, we wrapped up Week 1 of our Remote Learning Program, with Week 2 beginning today, Monday, March 30th. This success can only be attributed to the hard work, time, and talent that our district's entire team has invested in this effort. It is truly a remarkable accomplishment, made even more remarkable when you consider that each of these employees were adapting to their "new normal," – including working from home, meeting remotely, as well as juggling their responsibilities to care for family and friends, to name a few things.

During Week 1, many of our teachers reached out to students using the tools available through Google Classroom or commercially-available products such as Zoom or FlipGrid. Because many families are working in close quarters, we wanted to be explicit about our expectations of students and their families regarding student privacy. I have attached a document to this email that outlines those expectations with instructions to follow-up, no later than Friday, May 4th if you feel you are unable to meet those expectations.

This week, while staying connected with their students and rolling out Week 2 of our Remote Learning Program, Holliston's teachers and administrators will be conducting a comprehensive re-assessment of our current program, assessing it against the DESE guidelines and reviewing it for appropriateness knowing that schools will now be closed through at least May 1st.

At a minimum, we will be looking at the following areas of our current plan and reviewing it against DESE's new guidelines and our own goals for student learning, including:

- Providing meaningful and productive learning for approximately half the length of a regular school day;
- Providing students the opportunity to connect with one or more educators multiple times per week;
- Provide students with time each day for physical activity based on recommendations from educators;
- Provide additional time daily for enrichment activities such as the arts;
- Ensuring teachers are providing valuable feedback on student work completed at home;

- Reviewing the appropriateness of our current focus on “reinforcing skills already taught and applying and deepening those skills” to minimize the impact that this now-extended closure will have on all of our students, but particularly, on the ability of HHS students to qualify for academic credit for Term 3, Term 4, Semester 2 and courses 3 terms in duration; and
- Reviewing any proposed revisions that we consider to our current program against the legal and moral imperative that “students have equitable access to learning opportunities during the closure, keeping in mind the variety of technology, health, disability and language challenges” and other unique circumstances facing many of our students during this extraordinary time.

Any changes to our current plan will be shared with parents/guardians at the end of next week with Phase II of our Remote Learning Program going on-line on Monday, April 6.

Holliston Public Schools is not just focused on serving the academic needs of our students during this time. Our talented nurses are working hard to keep Holliston healthy and our incredible School Food Service employees are working hard to feed families-in-need. Important information from our School Nurses and Food Service staff are attached to this email.

In closing, I want to assure you that the Holliston Public Schools is committed to putting together the most comprehensive, compassionate and flexible plan for remote learning possible to accommodate families during these unprecedented times. It’s important to acknowledge that Holliston, our Commonwealth, our country and our planet are not experiencing an education crisis - we are experiencing a public health crisis that is impacting our public education system. Our decisions must be and will be driven by the needs of our students -- **all** of our students. We must accept the fact that we will not have the same educational outcomes this June that we have always had. We must accept the fact that the recovery period from a mandated 2-month school closure will last well into the 2020-2021 school year. At the same time, we must, and we will, find a way to minimize the impact that this COVID-19 crisis will have on our students’ futures. We will not, however, achieve this goal by sacrificing those students who are already struggling to catch up to their peers or who are unable to connect with our offerings due to challenges they or their families are facing during this public health crisis. That is not who we are as a community.

Respectfully,

Bradford L. Jackson, Ed.D.
Superintendent of Schools

[Holliston Student Privacy Expectations and Consent](#)

[Holliston School Nurse COVID-19 Update April 2020](#)

[Holliston Food Service April 2020 Newsletter](#)