**Bedford Public Schools**

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Jon Sills, Superintendent
Tricia Clifford, Ed.D.
Assistant Superintendent

March 27, 2020

Dear Bedford Public Schools Families,

Thank you for your support and patience during the past two weeks. We realize that you are all dealing with many different responsibilities and that these have been difficult days. We are grateful for the dedicated Bedford Public Schools staff. Special thanks to the town departments, and the school personnel who have worked together to ensure that our buildings are clean, provided technology devices to families and also, to the food service staff and administrators who have been providing meals to families in need.

On Friday March 13th, pursuant to Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) guidelines, we provided communication regarding guidance on enrichment activities students could do at home, and we followed up with another communication on Friday, March 20th, with an enrichment website for student and family access. Given that we will be closed at least until May 4, <u>next week we will begin the transition from voluntary participation in enrichment activities to required engagement with online learning.</u> We will craft these learning activities in ways that account for the challenging conditions that many families will face when trying to help our younger students access the learning.

As we move into more structured remote home learning, we are guided by the vision that we shared in our recent collaborative vision statement co-authored with our neighboring school districts. You may find this on our website, www.bedfordps.org. A summary of this vision is reflected in the following principles and goals for remote learning:

- Remaining mindful of and factoring in the anxiety and other impactful conditions that this crisis is imposing upon our students, our educators, and all of their families.
- Maintaining and nurturing our connections with our students
- Providing work that is meaningful and that mitigates skills regression
- Promoting choice, flexibility, engagement and creativity
- Reinforcing prior learning and deepening understanding and exercising students' critical thinking, problem-solving and creativity

<u>Caveat:</u> Just as our closure decision pre-dated the Governor's edict, we are moving forward at this time prior to receiving new guidance from DESE. Should that guidance come forward and alter these plans in any way, we will need to make adjustments. We are awaiting guidance

regarding April Vacation as well, but our working assumption is that it will be eliminated. If the decision is left to the districts, it is our plan to call the past two weeks April Vacation, and not interrupt the teaching and learning that we are about to launch.

Please read the following outline of our plans for remote home learning.

Sincerely,

Jon Sills, Superintendent
Tricia Clifford, EdD, Assistant Superintendent

## BEDFORD PUBLIC SCHOOLS ONLINE LEARNING

### Getting Started
Chromebooks will be distributed on Monday to those who need them.

Teachers will use Tuesday, March 31 and Wednesday, April 1 to connect with their students, rekindle a sense of classroom community, and help to prepare them to set up their distance learning platforms: Seesaw and/or Google Classroom/Hangout.

We will expect all students to engage in the online learning activities/schoolwork that will begin mid-week. However, during this first week, as teachers develop their online teaching skills, the use of interactive platforms or of "live" whole class interactive videoconferencing will be voluntary. The more specific expectations described below will apply to teaching and learning starting on April 6.

### Length of Day
- Educator's primary role will be one of support for students and families as they explore concepts and skills and navigate changes in their day-to-day lives.
- Learning time will be shorter, and we can expect that it will be reduced by at least half each day and week. Under the present conditions, teachers cannot virtually replicate the actual classroom, but they will approximate it in meaningful ways.

### What Is Important for Families to Understand
- This is a first for all of us, and for teachers, it is a first for most regarding the use of remote learning. Teachers have to learn how to use the online platforms, how to scaffold learning, how to check for understanding and how to provide effective feedback.
- Teachers who are also parents will be working under particularly challenging conditions that will require flexibility particularly around the timing of direct instruction and whole class interactions. Many will be simultaneously helping their own children to access their schools' online learning, caring for infants or toddlers, or caring for an ill family member.
- Not all families are similarly positioned to support our younger learners, and this needs to be considered as teachers assign their work. While teachers support kids' understanding of directions and provide the "how to's'" in the classroom, a parents who are, for example an active medical employees, may not be able to provide this support to their children during the day.
- Teachers may stumble or make mistakes that they would not normally make in the familiar face-to-face classroom setting. This is not a time to judge our educators or embarrass them through social media gossip, as I know most families would agree.
- During the first two weeks, the learning focus will be on re-creating connections, mitigating isolation, reinforcing previous learning, practicing skills, and engaging in critical and creative thinking. Following this period, and depending upon DESE guidance, we may begin to integrate carefully selected new concepts and skills.

### What Families Should Expect

- K-12, work will be assigned twice a week in most cases. Depending upon the nature of the assignments, frequency may vary.
- Davis and Lane School students will receive a daily message from their teachers to help students get ready for the day.
- Where possible, teachers will create routines so that students will know when to expect online engagement, discussions, demonstrations, etc. Given that many of our teachers also have children at home, this expectation will require flexibility.
- Teachers will engage their whole class interactively a minimum of one time per week.
- At the middle school, team leaders will create schedules so that live activities from one subject to another do not conflict with each other.
- High school administrators are creating a schedule so that live activities do not conflict with each other from one subject to another.
- Where appropriate, teachers will provide feedback, but not in the form of grades.
- Classroom teachers and special education teachers will coordinate so that assignments can be made accessible to students with disabilities. This may include reaching out to families to better understand what students need as they engage in the learning.
- Our younger students will need their parent(s) support to access the learning. More specific information, including "how to" videos will come from your principals or teachers with regard to the learning platforms.
- Teachers will follow-up with families if students are not engaged. The purpose of this communication is to offer support to help students access the learning.
- When teachers are engaging students using video conferencing, teachers and students should be in spaces that protect the confidentiality of their families.

### How Parents and Faculty Can Support Students' Engagement
- Information and communication are critical to our mission of engaging all children and preventing gaps to develop or widen. I**f your child is having difficulty, or if you are having difficulty helping your child access the learning, PLEASE contact the teacher or counselor.**
- Routines are important- they not only provide structure, but they ready the child for any regular communication from the teacher or any class-wide online discussions or lessons.
- If parents or students have questions for their teachers, they should email the question and allow for 24 hours, excluding weekends, for a response.

### Special Education
- For most students, Special Education Services during remote learning will be primarily focused on helping students access their general education instruction, maintaining skills and preventing regression.
- Students will have access to their special education liaisons and related service providers throughout the week for support with academic classes.
- Students will continue to receive specialized instruction, though not at the frequency or duration as during the regular school year.

- Special education services will also be provided in an alternative manner than during the school year. Services may be supplemented with technology resources and teaching assistant support.
- For most students, services may shift to focus on consultation and collaboration with general education teachers rather than direct services to students
- Where appropriate, teaching assistants may provide additional remote support to students through learning platforms, email or telephone conferences.

**No Grades for Third Quarter-Modified Standards or Pass/Fail**
In the Bedford Public Schools, elementary schools do not earn grades, and the elementary report cards will need to be modified to account for lost learning time.

At the middle and high school levels, no grades will be issued for the third quarter. Teachers are asked to record Pass/Fail based on the work that was completed through our last day of school, (March 12, 2020). For the middle and high schools, all fourth quarter grading will be Pass/Fail. This will be based upon work completion/non-completion.

Teachers may administer formative assessments (ways of checking for student understanding) but no summative assessments (graded and recorded assessments).

**Technical Issues**
If you are having technical difficulties,  If you are having technical difficulties, please email Tech Support at tech_support@bedfordps.org.

A second communication will address questions regarding MCAS, AP exams, graduation, transcripts, etc.