



Weston Public Schools  
Office of the Superintendent  
William S. McKersie, Ph.D.

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## MEMORANDUM

To: WPS Families and Staff  
From: William S. McKersie, Ph.D., Superintendent  
Date: March 13, 2020  
Subject: WPS Closure Updates 3.13.2020

Going into the weekend, I want to provide updates on several developments from the past 24 hours. The updates pertain to the length of the school year, standardized assessments, academic programming during closure, and school building status.

### 180-Day Requirement and Makeup Days

Yesterday, the Governor waived the 180-day requirement for all districts in the State. This means that the last day of school for all Connecticut public school students, regardless of the number of lost school days, will be June 30, 2020. We will still be obligated to make up any lost days between our return to school and June 30.

### Spring Vacation (WPS: April 10-17, 2020)

Spring vacation is still scheduled from April 10-17. Districts may have to make use of their spring vacations as make up days. However, we are not in a position to make that decision at this point (it is too early in our closure to decide accurately).

### Length of District Closure

We have no clarity on the likely length of District closure. We will only reopen when approved by the Weston-Westport Health District and the Town of Weston Emergency Operation Center (EOC). Districts that have given estimates for return dates have done so in highly tentative ways, which likely will have to change. We would ask that all staff and families be patient with this hard fact: we do not know when we will be able to return.

### Standardized Assessments

We learned yesterday that the Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE) is developing plans for flexibility in the scheduling of the SBA, NGSS and SAT (used for state accountability purposes). They also are working with the College Board on how to manage the timing and provision of the SAT and AP exams. We will let you know as soon as we have more information.

### Voluntary versus Required Extended Learning Opportunities (ELO)

Late yesterday, all families received communication about the Extended Learning Opportunities (ELO) we will be instituting during district closure to support student learning. You may have noted the statement that, “*extended learning opportunities are not required activities. The tasks will not be collected, graded or influence a child’s grade.*” We are using an honor system until we can determine if the State will award Weston a waiver to provide what has been officially called “Distance Learning.” To achieve the waiver, a complex set of legal, contractual, and employee and student equity provisions (tied to State and Federal regulations) would have to be met. Without the waiver, we cannot “require” student work, or “require” teachers to grade or evaluate student work.

The CSDE has discouraged districts from applying for waivers because of the complex requirements to be met. Some districts in the area have applied for waivers; others have chosen not to. While we get moving with the ELOs this coming week, we are planning for “Distance Learning,” which we would turn to as soon as we know we can have a viable and approved program.

Thus, for now, we are using an **honor system**. We would ask that all students and families do their best to participate in what is a carefully designed approach to learning while we are closed. We intentionally are phasing the roll-out of learning opportunities in a digital environment: phase one will be the ELOs; if all goes well, phase two will be “Distance Learning.” We will be updating you regularly on academic programming as the closure proceeds, and will let you know promptly if we transition from an honor system to a “Distance Learning” system.

### Deep Cleaning of All District Facilities

Deep cleaning using EPA-approved products, known to combat the Coronavirus, has been underway in all District facilities. We will continue this as required during District closure.

### School Building Access Now Limited

As of yesterday, we disabled all staff FOBs for the school buildings. This is only while the District is closed, and is an attempt to help maintain facility cleanliness. WPS staff: Please be in touch with your building principal if you require access to the schools. (School building access for students and families is not allowed.)

We appreciate your patience during what will be a difficult phase of unchartered work to protect the health of all students, staff and families, while continuing to provide learning opportunities.