



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

MEMORANDUM

To: Weston Families and Staff
From: William S. McKersie, Ph.D., Superintendent
Kenneth G. Crow, Ed.D., Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum & Instruction
Michael Rizzo, Assistant Superintendent of Pupil Services
Date: March 18, 2020
Subject: Distance Learning Phase Two - Begins Monday, March 23

It is very exciting to announce that Weston Public Schools will enter Phase Two of its distance learning initiative on Monday, March 23, thus fully making the transition from ‘Campus to Cloud.’ We would like you and your child to think of Monday as the first day of school. Until Monday, students should continue to work on their Extended Learning Opportunities.

Students and teachers will need time to get acclimated to their daily routines in a digital environment, but we are confident that, with your partnership, this will be a successful transition. As we begin this journey together, the district recognizes that this is uncharted territory, and we will need to be patient with each other. Please be assured that teachers will be flexible and understanding with their students.

Principals will be sending out communications on Thursday with specific details regarding student expectations and daily schedules.

K-8 Instruction

At the beginning of each day, teachers will post their instruction and assignments on their electronic platform by 8:00 a.m. Teachers will be available during the workday to respond to emails and provide support. For example, a classroom teacher may post a brief video with direct instruction on a new concept along with learning activities the student will need to complete. We are referring to this as asynchronous instruction because the teacher is not teaching the class live. As our teachers and students become more accustomed to digital learning, there may be opportunities for K-8 teachers to build upon this framework.

9-12 Instruction

We recognize the specialized nature of high school courses. In addition, high school students are more familiar with working in a digital environment with their current courses. Therefore, the instructional approach will include what was described above in the K-8 section, as well as teachers and students being present in real time for each scheduled class period. This will afford them the opportunity to communicate with each other regarding daily assignments.

Weston High School will hold a special digital learning orientation for students on Friday, March 20 in order to prepare for Monday's rollout. Students will log in to their classes and be greeted by their teachers to test out the system. This will enable us to identify any challenges and ensure a smooth transition for high school students. More information will follow regarding the orientation from Principal Wolak in her update to students and families on Thursday.

Special Education and Pupil Services

To the greatest extent possible, we are committed to making our best efforts to assure that each student with a disability is provided the special education and related services identified in the student's IEP. This will be done using Distance Learning Plans for each student. Distance Learning Plans are being developed for each student and will be shared with families within the next several days. Each child's plan will be individualized to meet his/her needs, and will contain synchronous and asynchronous opportunities for support and services. These plans will be shared with each family by your child's special education teachers and related service providers. Mr. Rizzo will be sending a general update to families with students receiving special education services by the end of this week.

Commissioner's Update

On Monday, March 16, we received good news from Dr. Miguel A. Cardona, Commissioner of Education, CT State Department of Education. The Commissioner has decided that districts no longer have to submit waivers for distance learning and is encouraging districts to move forward with their learning plans as soon as possible.

While the waiver is no longer necessary, the Weston Board of Education voted yesterday in its meeting convened via Google Hangouts to approve our waiver application. Dr. McKersie submitted the approved waiver to the State Department of Education for our mutual records. This is an important step to codify the shared commitment of the staff, administration, and BOE to distance learning while we are closed for COVID-19.

Further, the Commissioner stated that districts may continue to employ their current school calendars, and "*may end the school year at their regularly scheduled end date.*" Weston's current last day of school is June 12, 2020. We are seeking clarification from the Commissioner's Office and will provide more information regarding the school calendar in future updates.

April Vacation

In yesterday's meeting, the Weston Board of Education also discussed the status of the April Vacation under the umbrella of COVID-19 planning. The BOE prefers to delay a decision about the April Vacation, in case we need it for instructional time, in part or in whole. We need to see how the adjustment to Distance Learning goes, and if the last school date can still be June 12. We will provide an update on April Vacation at the end of next week.

In closing, we recognize the importance of continuing the education of all our students, and very importantly, want to encourage all our students and families to be safe, healthy, and patient at this time. Our community, like so many across the nation and the world, must continue to work together in all ways to promote our health and wellness.

To quote BOE Chair Tony Pesco, who wrote to WPS families and staff earlier today on behalf of the full Board, *"In my 27 years living in this town, Weston has always been an example of how a community adapts and comes together in times of need. While the uncertainty will continue for some time, there is one thing I am certain about, Weston will emerge from this crisis and continue to prosper. Soon we will all be back to our busy lives; cherish this time with your family and be safe!"*