



# Colchester School District

Administrative Offices, 125 Laker Lane, PO Box 27, Colchester, Vermont 05446

Phone: (802) 264-5999 ● [www.csdvt.org](http://www.csdvt.org) ● Fax: (802) 863-4774

---

March 27, 2020

Dear CSD Students and Families,

As we shift towards planning for long-term remote learning, we wanted to provide an overview of how this “system” will work in our district. Obviously, it will rely heavily on technology using the many digital tools and resources available to us. Our first step is ensuring everyone has a device to work on. Students in grades 6-12 already have assigned Chromebooks and laptops, and earlier today we sent out a survey to families with students in grades K-5 assessing their needs for a device. We have a number of classroom devices that will be loaned out to students who do not already have access to one at home.

For next week (March 30 through April 3), all students will continue to work on the assignments already provided to them during this “maintenance of learning” phase. Basically, it is work that they are already familiar with because they had begun learning it while school was still in session. The following week (April 6 through April 10), we will begin to weave in new learning, also referred to as “continuation of learning”. By the end of next week, your school’s principal will further explain the details of how this will all work but we wanted to provide you with an overarching idea of the district’s framework. We are striving to be fully operational with our continuation of learning plan no later than April 13.

When designing our continuation of learning plan, there are two types of remote teaching and learning that will happen. The first is **synchronous learning** which means real-time or live communication with guardians or students through a phone call, Google Meet, or Zoom. Often these will be class check ins, question and answer sessions, or even a remote morning meeting. The second type of learning is how our teachers will provide instruction and that is called **asynchronous learning**. Asynchronous learning means our teachers will record videos for guardians and students that can be viewed *at their convenience*. One popular method of this is screencasting, which allows teachers to record and narrate their computer screen. Asynchronous learning will allow our families flexibility in when their students are learning; knowing that many will log on at different times but ensuring that all will have access to the same material from their teachers.

Below this initial letter is some further information and expectations for the use of video conferencing applications such as Google Meet/Hangout and Zoom. There is also a set of recommendations for the use of district devices. Please review them with your student(s).

I have been extremely impressed with the ability and willingness of our employees to create remote learning opportunities for our students. This is new for many of us. Over the past week your administrators and teachers have held a number of remote meetings to plan curriculum and develop lessons that could be delivered remotely to your student(s). Thank you for your patience and flexibility as we make the full transition to a remote learning environment, which will become our new normal. As always, if you need something please reach out to us. We are here, willing to help, and in this together! #WEARECOLCHESTER

Sincerely,  
Amy Minor  
Superintendent of Schools

## **Colchester School District**

### **Video Conference Information for Families**

As we try to offer an educational routine for students during this closure, some teachers are transitioning to using video conferencing with students. We know that some parents/guardians have used video conferencing tools for their own remote work, and may be familiar with some important elements, but would like to provide everyone with information to consider while students participate in these online sessions.

For the duration of any video/audio conference, participants are expected to act in a school-appropriate manner. Regular school rules and consequences will apply. In the event of inappropriate behavior, a student may be removed from a call and disciplinary action may be taken.

If you do **NOT** want your student participating in these video conferences, please contact your child's school. Please note that by electing to not have your child participate in video conferencing in the online classroom environment, it will by no means limit their access to education. Classroom teachers are working with families to develop the best ways to continue a connection and offer an educational routine for those that are available during this closure. This is uncharted territory for schools and families and we want to do our best to support you and your children by maintaining a connection to the school that fits within your life.

#### **Joining a video conference:**

- Teachers will share a link that students will access either via their school-provided email account, their calendar, Seesaw, or Google Classroom.
- Students join from their Chromebook or another device. If they are using a tablet or phone, it is likely that you will need to download the appropriate app.
- Students in our K-12 buildings do not have the ability to start a Google Meet, but they can join one that their teacher creates.
- Please note that the recording option for students in Google Meet has been turned off for the safety and confidentiality of all users.

#### **Preparing for a video conference:**

- Please be dressed for school.
- Attend from an appropriate place: kitchen table, desk, common area, etc. (not sitting on your bed or walking around the house, etc). Be aware of what appears behind you in the meeting.
- A place with good lighting is helpful.
- To avoid embarrassing or potentially inappropriate cameos and to protect the privacy of those who live with you, be sure other people in your home know you are on a learning video/audio meeting.

#### **During a video conference:**

- If you need to *share* your computer screen during the video meeting, close all windows you would not want others to see and disable notifications for accounts (e.g., Slack, Facebook). You do not want others to see information about other students, your email, or personal files.

- Turn off the camera if/when you choose. The avatar used to identify you in Google will show in place of the video.
- Google Meet allows you to test your audio and video prior to the meeting in the settings. Headphones are a good option to help hear the conversations better. Headphones with a built-in microphone can help to prevent the possibility of unwanted audio being picked up from the background. If your microphone is not working correctly, remember you have the option to call into the meeting using a phone. To do this, click on the three dots on the bottom right and look for the option to use a phone for audio.
- Mute your microphone when you are not speaking during a group meeting. Instruct students to do that as well.

### **General Device Recommendations for Students and Families:**

For our middle and high school students, having the device at home should be somewhat routine. For some of our elementary students, this will be a new experience in terms of having their “own” device at home. Here are some practices that might be helpful for you and your student(s):

- Our Technology Help Desk can be reached at (802) 264-5727 and is available for support. Any questions about devices or their use can be fielded at this number during this time. For questions about learning and curriculum, please direct them to your teacher. Any other questions can be routed to the Help Desk and we will triage a support person to call you back if the question cannot be answered by personnel at that time.
- Try to keep devices away from areas where accidents could occur, kitchen counters near the sink, places where water, coffee, etc. could be spilled, or accessible to very young children.
- Devices can and should be left plugged in when not being used to maintain their charge.
- Some teachers are using videoconferencing to connect with students in classroom settings. Audio can sometimes be a challenge. Experiment for the best solution. Headphones with built-in microphones, the kind that often come with cell phones are a good solution for good listening and transmitting of questions, etc. Sometimes, and especially on Chromebooks, students may find the built-in speakers and microphone work best, but this may require the student to be somewhat isolated which can be less desirable to parental supervision.
- CSD has an expectation that devices will return to school in the same condition as they left. Many have been “pulled” from other classrooms and programs within CSD, so please do not allow students to “personalize” the covers with stickers or such.
- It is very IMPORTANT that you as parents have some supervision of devices within your home. Some ways to manage this include:
  - Structuring times of use. Teachers may request students to be synchronously connected during a video conferencing time, but there are many times for asynchronous learning too, where students are working independently. You can and should limit times online, especially outside of the “school day” and encourage students to do other activities. Exercise outside, read books, do paper activities teachers have sent home, etc.

- Students should be using the devices in open areas of your home, somewhere that an adult can monitor the online activities of students. In other words, it is probably best not to have younger students take them to their individual rooms unsupervised. We have done our best in this short time to “block” online sites inappropriate for students, but parental supervision is the best policy.
- Be an active part of your student’s learning, asking about activities they are doing online.