



Colchester School District

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Dear Colchester School Community,

The district's leadership team watched Governor Scott's press conference this morning and we wanted to provide you with a brief update regarding the information that was shared today. Vermont's Secretary of Education, Dan French shared the following:

- *The current public health data does not support the practical re-opening of school for in-person instruction this spring. Schools will continue to be closed to in-person learning through the end of this school year and districts shall follow their established calendars for the remainder of the 2019-2020 school year.*
- *Group gatherings are limited to 10 people or less, with careful physical distancing and hygiene requirements. Schools should expect that larger group gatherings will not be permitted prior to the end of the school year.*
- *Schools may only plan in-person end of school year gatherings and graduations consistent with the State's limitations on the size of such gatherings; any other such events shall occur virtually or by means other than in-person gatherings.*

What the Leadership Team is working on:

The District Leadership Team met virtually after the press conference and is in the process of analyzing how these requirements will impact our work here in Colchester. We will be using this information to build our final plans for many critical components connected to closing out the school year. You can anticipate that over the next several weeks we will be pushing information to our families on many topics. We know there are lots of questions out there, below is a small sampling of decisions and that we are working to finalize.

- Finalizing the last day of school for students and employees.
- Transition plans for students who will be transitioning into a new school building next year (preschool, 2nd, 5th, 8th graders and all new students to the district).
- Kindergarten screening process.
- Library book return process.
- Students retrieving any items they left in the school building.
- Device return process.
- The opportunity for faculty to get back into their classroom to close it up for summer.

End of year celebrations and graduations:

While watching the press conference, we were especially seeking information and guidance to help our 8th and 12th grade students and their families celebrate the milestone of their graduation. Following the guidance that was provided, it is clear that graduations will not take place in a traditional way. This decision was made

for the health and safety of all Vermonters and while we are mourning this official announcement right along with our students, we are committed to finding a way to honor our graduates. Our middle and high schools have already formed committees to solicit input and develop alternative plans for their respective graduations. Students and families should expect a survey in the near future to gather feedback to assist the committees in determining the most important aspects of the ceremony to our graduates and how we can best honor this monumental achievement given the current gathering restrictions.

Summer school programs:

Our district provides five different summer school programs. Secretary French informed superintendents that guidance specific to summer school programs will be released by the Vermont Agency of Education over the next two weeks. Once we have that, we will finalize plans for any programs that the district decides to open.

Next school year:

I know many of our families are starting to see information on the news and social media about the reopening of school in the fall. As expected, today's announcement did not provide us with any official regulations or recommendations regarding fall, but I know that the Agency of Education is working hard to give school districts guidance on this topic so that we can begin planning. Balancing the need to plan with waiting to use the most updated public health data is important. We are staying closely connected with the Agency of Education and the Vermont Department of Health and we will want to ensure that we open school this fall in Colchester that is in alignment with the most current rules and regulations so that we can keep our entire school community safe.

Physical distancing reminder:

Earlier this week Governor Scott relaxed the "Stay at Home" rules to allow small gatherings and outdoor recreation. The guidance suggests that families only connect with others from "trusted households" such as family, neighbors, and friends known to be following the recommendations from the Department of Health regarding precautions such as social distancing and hand washing.

I know there is still a feeling of uncertainty in regards to events in the immediate future. Please know we will update you as soon as information becomes available and plans are finalized.

Be well,

Amy Minor

Superintendent of Schools