



Colchester School District

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Thursday, March 26, 2020

Dear CSD Families, Employees, & Students,

Earlier this week Governor Scott issued Addendum 6 to his Executive Order which puts in place a “[Stay Home, Stay Safe](#)” order and directs all non-essential businesses and non-profits to cease in-person operations. This order became effective March 25, 2020, at 5 p.m., and will last until April 15, 2020. We have been informed by the Secretary of Education, that **schools will be closed through at least Friday, April 17th**. That following week (April 20-24) is our April break which we had previously scheduled. At this moment, we are unsure of what this extended dismissal will mean for school following April vacation, but we thought it was necessary to get this information out to you as soon as possible.

Before we get into the details, I want to first acknowledge how overwhelming the transition to remote learning has been for *everyone*. From teachers and administrators to parents, caregivers, and of course, our students. We were asked to pivot on a dime and I could not be more proud of this community who collectively raised its hand and said, “How can I help?”. We know that many of you are juggling full or part-time work with the added role of home-school teacher. The initial shock of the school closure is starting to wear off and the day-to-day grind of home confinement is setting in. It is unquestionably hard. Please know we are only asking you to do the best you can. We are all here to support you and to support your student and encourage you to reach out if you need help.

Here are some updates that have come up over the past week.

Closure Timeframe - As stated above, schools will now be closed through *at least* Friday, April 17, 2020. With April vacation scheduled to occur the following week, at this time **the earliest our schools would open would be Monday, April 27, 2020**. Many of you might be wondering if April break will remain in place given the situation we are in. At this point, we are following the guidance from the Agency of Education and no final decisions regarding the status of April vacation or a potential return to school have been made. As soon as we hear of a more definitive return date, we will let you know as soon as possible so you can continue to plan for your family.

Student Meals - Governor Scott’s “Stay Home” order asks for schools to continue with feeding students. This is essential work, particularly for our economically disadvantaged families. We will continue to provide meals using our school buses for as long as we are able to. For bus route information visit our website: <https://www.csdvt.org/district/about/covid.php>.

Continuity of Learning - School districts have been asked to begin planning for an extended period of school closure. The Agency of Education has asked that districts maintain the progress students are currently making while at the same time begin to craft the next phase of learning plans. These next learning plans will incorporate new units and curriculum and we will be sure to communicate with you as we get closer to rolling them out.

Technology - In anticipation of the next phase of learning plans, our technology department is in the process of collecting all of the Chromebooks and iPads out of our K-5 classrooms. Soon, every K-5 family will receive a Google survey asking about their access to the internet and if they have an available device at home for their student. We

have a limited amount of iPads for kindergarten students and Chromebooks for 1st through 5th graders. Our goal is to distribute those to families who do not have any devices at home. **If you do not have a device at home for your student to use, please keep an eye out for that survey.**

Statewide Testing - The Agency of Education recently received preliminary approval for their waiver request for statewide testing that occurs annually each spring. This means that students will not have to take literacy and math assessments administered through Smarter Balance Assessment Consortium (SBAC); Vermont Science Assessment; or the Fitness Assessment.

Special Education - There was no new guidance as it relates to special education this week. Our case managers are continuing to partner with families as we move to the next phase of learning plans. We are waiting for further guidance from the Agency of Education as it relates to IEP services moving forward.

Department of Health Update - The Department of Health (DOH) states that if you learn of someone who is symptomatic and you are concerned that you were in close contact with that person, the decision is up to you as to whether or not to self-quarantine. If you are concerned about your health, please call your doctor immediately.

CSD still has no confirmed cases, although the DOH is not conducting tests for all showing symptoms due to testing limitations. It is also important to note that in most cases, the DOH is no longer reaching out to close contacts of those who test positive (or exhibit symptoms). The responsibility is up to each individual to take action to reduce the spread. Further information on testing can be found on the DOH website [here](#).

As word spreads about individuals who have tested positive, please keep in mind the impact on the individual. As an educational institution bound by HIPPA, we are not in a position to notify our communities about who has tested positive, as this would violate the rights of the individual. As always, take the necessary precautions, follow the Vermont Department of Health's guidelines, and be kind, respectful and supportive to one another as we navigate this difficult time.

Social Distancing - With the number of cases continuing to climb in Chittenden County, Vermont, and across the country, we are asking everyone to do their part. Stay home if you can. As hard as it is, we ask that you don't meet up with anyone who doesn't already live in your house. Wash your hands often and do your best to stay positive. The immune-compromised and elderly people in our community are depending on us to do so. [Here's a 1:30 video](#) from the University of Vermont Medical Center about how staying home can save lives.

There are still a lot of decisions to be made and if we've learned anything so far, many things will change after those decisions have been made which will lead to *new* decisions and changes. We are constantly evaluating the procedures and plans put in place by our district thus far and the constant stream of new guidance coming from the Agency of Education and Vermont Department of Health. Stay tuned as we will share further updates as soon as we have more clarification.

Sincerely,

Amy Minor
Superintendent of Schools