



April 4, 2020

Dear Parents and Families:

As referenced in numerous communications, these certainly are unprecedented times. Our schools are being asked to do something never done before and on a scale that is vast, which presents challenges of infrastructure, training, and especially equity of access that are all daunting, to say the least. I am reminded of my mother who once said that my generation had never had to cope with a defining and long-lasting event, such as the Great Depression or World War. Now we are in that moment, and we must do what our ancestors did and rise to the challenge. I have no doubt that we will do that! In fact, every day I see evidence that you and your teachers are indeed doing that.

We have used the past three weeks to shift from a normal school environment to supplemental and optional learning activities, and now are moving to a phase of structured and required "remote learning." While it cannot match what is learned when we have your children in school, we must replicate it as best we can. During this period, we have learned from other districts and from one another, explored options, and planned purposefully. We have used our time to make daily connections with district leaders, principals, staff, health officials, and Town leaders. It has been a whirlwind, but an astonishing learning experience. The information that follows reflects the thinking of our Task Force, a hard working group of staff across the district, skillfully led by Dr. Elizabeth Hallett. We owe them a debt of gratitude, as this is a significant task for over 300 employees serving 1,700 students.

I feel compelled to mention that all of the emphasis on teaching and learning is important, but not (in my opinion) as imperative as ensuring the social and emotional well being of our children. We have to continue to underscore that message with you and the broader community. I know this is happening in each of our schools and across Nantucket, and some of the outreach I see honestly brings tears to my eyes.

We know that this is hard work, exhausting work, for our staff and for you as parents. We also realize that our parents and community members are balancing personal and professional lives like never before, and that many of you may feel ill equipped to be greater participants in the education of your children. We are all doing our best in these extraordinary circumstances.

We thank you for your patience and understanding as we roll out our Remote Learning Plan on Monday, April 6th. It is filled with information and resources to guide and support you and your child. Please take time to review this important document, and don't hesitate to let your child's teacher or principal know if you have questions or concerns.

W. Michael Cozort  
Superintendent of Schools

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## I. Plan for Long-Term School Closure

As you know, Nantucket Public Schools will be closed until Monday, May 4, 2020. While we have the greatest of hopes of returning to school at that time, we must be prepared if school closures are extended. This document provides an in-depth explanation of the **Nantucket Public Schools Remote Learning Plan** during the length of the closure and beyond, if necessary.

## II. NPS Remote Learning Guidance

**Remote learning** is a model for educating children that is quite different from a traditional classroom setting. Students will be asked to work on tasks and activities both independently or with others through virtual or online platforms. It is a big shift from what we have always known, so we must give ourselves time, patience and flexibility as we learn together - teacher, student, and parent!

The most important outcome of this new learning model is for students to feel cared for and supported by their teachers and to be meaningfully engaged in learning activities each day for some portion of the day. We want teachers to stay in touch with them and with you, their parents and families, during this difficult time, providing guidance, support and encouragement along the way.

Here is some guidance about remote learning:

- We understand that students will be participating in self-directed learning most likely at home without the structure of school, their teachers, and with lots of other things happening in their lives.
- We understand that parents cannot be expected to take the place of teachers; you may not know the content or understand the best way to teach it. For example, the elementary math we now teach is 100% different than the elementary math many of us learned.
- We understand that parents also may be juggling work or working from home, taking care of younger children or family members, or dealing with illnesses.
- Learning time will be significantly shorter, approximately one half of a regular school day.
- Kids won't be expected to learn everything that they would learn in the regular school year. Teachers will be assigning engaging and interesting learning activities and tasks that strengthen their current knowledge and deepen their learning. However, in some cases, teachers may wish to continue with some new material, particularly at the high school level.
- Teachers will be keeping the needs of all students in mind, including the needs of students with disabilities, English Learners, students living in single parent homes, students who have multiple siblings and limited devices, or students who might have internet connectivity issues.
- We believe it is important to limit our students' screen time.
- We understand that most students will be learning **independently**. Most students should be able to work on learning activities with minimal support from parents and caregivers. Time is built into the schedule for independent learning to happen.

- We know that some students will need extra support. Schools have also built time into the schedule where students can ask for help or get more assistance on their work.
- Parents and families should only be expected to provide the same level of support they would provide for homework and little more.
- You can expect regular communication from the school and your child's teacher so that there is a sense of school and classroom community.
- Lessons and activities will include options or a menu of choices for students. Some of these may have supports built in. This allows kids to choose what learning activities works best for them.
- Accommodations will be made for students on 504 and IEP plans-- this has not changed and is an important legal requirement.
- Teachers will plan with supports for English Learners in mind. This is also an important legal requirement. If your child has questions, please email the teacher and/or the school translator for assistance.

#### **a. Student and Family Concerns**

Especially in this uncertain time, Nantucket Public Schools remain committed to the well-being of the whole child. As we move from optional activities to required learning for all NPS students, all staff want to be aware of students and families who have not communicated regularly during the period of school closures. Staff are encouraged to reach out to these families; these check-ins are opportunities to ensure that students and families remain connected and engaged. In addition, we encourage you, parents and families, to reach out to your child's school counselor and social worker for support. We also want to remind you that the district continues to provide breakfast and lunch services for children in need.

### **III: Remote Learning Schedules for Students**

As we shift from a regular educational setting to remote learning, we have tried to keep in mind what the research has shown us about how students learn best when they follow a remote learning model. Before Monday, April 6, you should receive your child's Remote Learning Schedule. As we try our new learning model, we will make adjustments as needed and communicate any changes to you promptly.

Please understand that these schedules are not only brand new for your children, but they are also brand new for the teachers. We kindly request your patience and understanding as we launch into our first weeks using these schedules/learning plans.

### **IV. For Parents/Families of Students with Disabilities**

#### **a. Virtual IEP Meetings and Evaluations**

We are facing a challenge in how to provide FAPE (Free Appropriate Public Education) for students with disabilities, while maintaining the health and safety of our students, families and our staff. Federal laws and regulations remain in effect; accommodations on 504 plans and IEPs must be provided and

timelines should be followed. However, we cannot conduct face to face evaluations which will delay the completion of some evaluations. Staff are trying to complete as many IEP meetings and evaluation components as possible. Upon return to school, once access to students is provided, these evaluations will need to be completed and a meeting held as soon as possible.

Parents have the right to request or agree to waive assessments and delay meetings until school buildings open. This should be documented in writing through an email to the liaison or special services office.

DESE recommends that districts convene IEP Team meetings telephonically or virtually using technologies such as Zoom. Schools need to ensure that interpreters are provided during telephonic or virtual IEP team meetings when English is not the parents' primary language. The district has a virtual meeting protocol in place. We ask that parents or guardians provide consent to participate in the conference through video chat (Zoom) or through the telephone. Please see guidance here regarding parent and staff expectations during virtual meetings.

[Virtual Expectations for Parents](#) (excerpts):

*The District strictly prohibits screenshots, pictures, audio/video recording and distribution of any remote team meeting. Please note that in Massachusetts it is illegal to record another person through any medium without his or her knowledge.*

*School staff will take steps to ensure that they are participating in the meeting in a quiet, private setting.*

*The District will make a reasonable, good faith effort to comply with special education related timelines.*

*A parent's participation in a remote IEP Team meeting signifies that the parent has opted to participate in a remote IEP Team meeting and agrees to abide by the District's expectations.*

## **b. IEP Related Documents**

While the buildings are closed, we cannot process hard copies of paperwork. Therefore, parents can receive IEP related documents through email. As mentioned in a letter to families sent on 4/1/2020:

“The school district is requesting your consent to receive your child's IEPs and IEP related documents by email. If you do not consent to receiving these documents by email, the school district will continue to provide these documents to you by mail or for pick-up (once the school building opens): however, please understand that this will delay your receipt of documentation.”

You can send an email to [chirinosm@npsk.org](mailto:chirinosm@npsk.org) or [earleb@npsk.org](mailto:earleb@npsk.org) and state your name and your child's name to give permission to receive documents through email. This form can also be used: [Parent Consent to receive IEP Documents Electronically](#)

If parents have access to a printer, they can print out the IEP signature page and the placement page and take a picture of it or scan it and email it back to the above email addresses. As an alternative, you can mail it to our Special Services Office at 10 Surfside Road, or you can request a hard copy once the building opens.

### **c. IEP Services**

The Federal Supplemental Fact Sheet (03-21-2020) offers the following advice: “Many disability-related modifications and services for students on 504 plans or IEPs may be effectively provided online. These may include, for instance, extensions of time for assignments, videos with accurate captioning or embedded sign language interpreting, accessible reading materials, and many speech or language services through video conferencing.”

Given the reduced school day and lack of ability to conduct face to face interventions, special education services will look different and will be reduced in frequency and duration. Many special education services will move from direct services to parent consultation. This will include sharing resources with families and following up with parents to review. Special education groups may be more difficult to implement, necessitating an increase in individual services through google, zoom meetings or phone calls. Student needs must be prioritized to ensure that students with the most intensive needs and those most likely to regress receive adequate services. IEP services offered to all special education students through remote learning experiences will be alternative yet appropriate.

Regarding the differences between remote special education and the agreed upon IEP services, it is important to note that services on the IEP are written to reflect conditions when schools are open. The IEP remains in effect and full services outlined in the IEP will resume once school buildings are open. Upon return to school, should a student demonstrate substantial regression and experience difficulty recouping skills due to reduced services, the TEAM will meet to consider compensatory services.

Special educators, teaching assistants and related service providers will collaborate with their general education colleagues to schedule services to avoid double booking students. The district has a [Disclaimer for online services](#) for parents to ensure that they will maintain student confidentiality when their students use online learning in case there are multiple students in an online group session.

Please contact Michele Boebert, Ph.D., Director of Special Services if you have any questions or concerns at [bradym@npsk.org](mailto:bradym@npsk.org)

### **V. For Parents/Families of English Learners**

**Kelly Cooney, [cooneyk@npsk.org](mailto:cooneyk@npsk.org), English Learner Director**

**Joseline Ramirez, [ramirezj@npsk.org](mailto:ramirezj@npsk.org), Bilingual Support Specialist**

**Eileen Taveras, [Taverase@npsk.org](mailto:Taverase@npsk.org), Bilingual Support Specialist, District Translator**

**Melany Mendez, [Mendezm@npsk.org](mailto:Mendezm@npsk.org), Bilingual Support Specialist**

As the parents of our students, you are the experts in their lives. We understand that these are stressful times. Please understand we value your home language and the funds of knowledge of your culture. Remote learning should provide your students choice in their learning, the opportunity to learn in their home language if that extra support is needed, and should not be only related to learning on a computer.

There are some laws and guidance that pertain to educating English Learner bilingual children that are intended to guarantee equal access to American public school education. In adherence to these guidelines the Nantucket Public Schools has ensured that English Learner students are “meeting by phone or computer” with their teachers who are planning meaningful remote learning opportunities. The technology department is working with teachers, families and interpreters to provide students with devices and to help families secure Internet access through hotspots and information from local providers offering reduced costs in response to COVID-19. If you are having difficulties with computers and the Internet, please contact [Saraviaj@npsk.org](mailto:Saraviaj@npsk.org) or [Erichsenj@npsk.org](mailto:Erichsenj@npsk.org).

Schedules and expectations for ESL services for multilingual students depend on English Language Development (ELD) levels and grade levels. Your student’s teachers will be communicating with you about schedules. At first it may be confusing, and the schedules may change a little. Please contact us to help you make sense of the multiple teacher schedules so we can help you make one student schedule for your child.

Regular content and ESL teachers will meet virtually to co-plan and share best practices for how to best plan for remote learning with you and your family. Dually identified students will continue to receive ESL and Special Education services. The district’s bilingual interpreter/ translator bilingual specialist team is providing translations of written documents and are interpreting in remote classrooms & meetings. Your students are expected to attend “online” meetings by phone or computer, to complete work and to ask for help when needed.

To support you and your family in remote learning, we recommend the following tips and guidelines:

- Contact us with any questions so we can assist you in this transition to remote learning.
- Set up a space for your student to use. Make sure the space allows for privacy for household members.
- Create a routine and daily schedule that will support your student’s success while learning from home.
- Make a list of activities that you and your student can do in addition to their classwork. Include options from our specialists ( art, music, physical education) to balance the day. Include active and outdoor time each day.
- In virtual learning sessions, it is important that we continue to respect the privacy and intellectual property rights of our community. When participating in remote learning, participants may not save, record, share, or post the session or any photos from the session.
- Recommend that students wear earbuds when engaged in online learning. (To help them focus, eliminate background noise, and eliminate feedback.) Also we need to encourage families to respect when their kids are engaged in online learning.

We will hold ZOOM meetings weekly for parents. Please check your email for updates. Here are some website that are helpful to parents and families during these difficult times:

[Sano en casa: Un conjunto de herramientas para apoyar a las familias afectadas por el COVID-19](#)

[Para las Familias](#)

## **VI. Student Assessment**

### **a. Assessing Student Work**

Because a remote learning model is so different from a traditional school model, we have to think about how we assess student learning. Based on current research about remote learning, we will be moving to a feedback model, where teachers will provide constructive feedback, instructional support, and suggestions about the work that students have completed. We also know that we must consider whether students have had equitable access to learning opportunities during this closure, keeping in mind the variety of challenges that could occur. We will continue to discuss and provide guidance to teachers as we determine the most effective way to assess student work during the closure.

### **b. Grading**

At the recommendation of DESE and Commissioner Riley, Nantucket Public Schools will be moving from traditional grading to a **Pass/Fail** system. There are still many questions and more research to be reviewed with regard to this new system, so we ask for your patience as we work to provide additional guidance to you in the near future.

### **c. Report Cards for Trimester 2 (NES, NIS, CPS)**

Due to the interruption of teaching and learning this term, some of the standards taught and introduced this trimester were not practiced or assessed to the sufficient depth or mastery intended. Report cards will reflect students' measured ability up to March 13 instead of the scheduled end Trimester 2 (March 20). Report cards for Trimester 2 will be published in Aspen on April 17, 2020.

### **d. Report Cards for Term 3 (NHS)**

Nantucket High School will maintain Friday, April 10, 2020 as the last day of Quarter 3. Students will be assessed as Pass/Fail or Credit/No Credit following the suggested guidance offered by the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education and Commissioner Riley. Work done prior to closure as well as engagement during our primary week of Remote Learning will be used to determine a student's achievement for Quarter 3. Departments and individual teachers will be providing more specific guidance for students and courses. We will be making determinations for assessment and grades for Quarter 4 as information on best practice and further guidance from DESE become available.



#### **e. High School Seniors at Risk of Not Graduating**

The Superintendent of Schools and the High School Principal have participated in a number of conference calls with Commissioner Jeff Riley and Department of Elementary and Secondary Education staff. High school seniors at risk of not graduating is a concern for all public schools, DESE is aware of the issue, and more guidance is forthcoming. The global pandemic presents challenges for us all, and now more than ever we need to provide additional opportunities for students to succeed. At this time, we plan to follow a Pass/Fail or Credit/No Credit system and develop ways for high school seniors in danger of not passing to make up any failing grades or missing credits.

#### **f. Federal Government Announces State Waivers on Standardized Tests**

On March 20, 2020, the U.S. Secretary of Education announced in a press release that students impacted by school closures due to the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic can bypass standardized testing for the 2019-2020 school year. Upon a proper request, the Department will grant a waiver to any state that is unable to assess its students due to the ongoing national emergency, providing relief from federally mandated testing requirements for this school year. Additional legislative action by the State of Massachusetts and a formal request by the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education is required to take advantage of this waiver. If school closure is extended further for Massachusetts, it is very likely that state assessments will be waived for the 2019-2020 school year.

#### **g. Advanced Placement from College Board**

The College Board provided the following update on the administration of Advanced Placement (AP) tests:

- Traditional face-to-face exam administrations will not take place. Students will take a 45-minute online free-response exam at home.
- Some students may want to take the exam sooner rather than later, while the content is still fresh. Other students may want more time to practice. For each AP subject, there will be 2 different testing dates. As of today, the College Board has not released the dates.
- AP curricula are locally developed and we defer to local decisions on how best to help students complete coursework. To be fair to all students, some of whom have lost more instructional time than others, the exam will only include topics and skills most AP teachers and students have already covered in class by early March.
- The College Board will allow any student already registered for an exam to cancel.

### **VII. Other Helpful Resources**

Knowledge is important, but where you get your knowledge is just as important. Local COVID-19 information and previous communications can be found at the following sites:

- **Town of Nantucket COVID-19 Updates:** Both the Town of Nantucket and Nantucket Cottage Hospital have updated information about COVID-19. Please feel free to visit their websites.
- **Do Your Part: Help Fight the COVID-19 Pandemic:** NPS parents, we need your help! We know that children who are old enough to be home and unsupervised might be getting together with friends. We are asking you to remind your children each day about the importance of social distancing. Encourage them to go outside to get some fresh air and exercise, but tell them that it is critical that they adhere to social distancing guidelines.

#### a. Verifying Family Contact Information

Given increased reliance on email and other forms of communication during this time, we would like to remind families to periodically review and update their contact information, found in the ASPEN Family Portal. Here families can view and update email addresses, phone numbers and emergency contacts, as well as other functions. We are unable to fully process address changes at this time, given the current pause in address verification through Family Portal. Families with address changes should contact the front office of their child's school. For those families experiencing technical difficulties, they can make an appointment with the Central Registrar for Family Portal help.

### VIII. What You Need to Know about Technology

#### a. Tech Tools

NPS students have access to the entire suite of Google tools (including Gmail, Google Meets, and Google Classroom). These tools, along with Zoom, may be regularly used with grades 3 through 12. Teachers will determine which platforms will be utilized for their classes to assign work and communicate this information with their students and your family.

Should you need assistance with these tools, please communicate with your child's teacher. For further assistance, contact the Tech Department at ([helpdesk@nantucketpsd.gethelpss.com](mailto:helpdesk@nantucketpsd.gethelpss.com)) or at this [link](#) on the Nantucket Public Schools website.

If you have not already done so, please review the [Acceptable Use Policy](#).

#### b. Student Data Privacy

We understand educators are seeing and hearing a lot of information about digital tools that are being used in other districts and perhaps with their own children or relatives. While we encourage the use of digital tools in remote learning, we need to take into account student safety and data privacy. Many software companies offer "free" apps and software, but consumers should be wary and exercise caution. Student data can be extrapolated and used for marketing and other purposes, and personally identifiable information about students may be revealed. It is necessary that you review the new [FERPA and Virtual Learning During COVID-19 Powerpoint](#) released on March 30, 2020, which safeguards the privacy of students, staff, and families, and outlines processes for using software and apps, including how to request the use of those software/apps as we work to protect student data. For additional information, visit the [Protecting Student Privacy Website](#) by the U.S. Department of Education.

## **IX. District and School Communications**

Students and families will continue to receive regular communication (emails, Class Dojos, Remind, etc.) from principals and individual teachers. Building principals will provide weekly updates to staff and parents on Mondays. Larger global announcements will be communicated from the District Central Office through email and Blackboard Connect phone messages. These updates will also be posted on the district's website: [www.npsk.org](http://www.npsk.org) as we receive new information from the Massachusetts Department of Education, governor's office, and the Town of Nantucket. All communications will be translated into Spanish; for other languages, please email Logan O'Connor: [occonnorl@npsk.org](mailto:occonnorl@npsk.org).

*\*Parts of this document were adapted from Lexington Public Schools' **Remote Learning Plan for Parents**. Nantucket Public Schools would like to thank LPS for their generosity in sharing their plan with the Massachusetts Association of School Superintendents in a gesture of true collaboration and partnership.*