



The Milton Public Schools

COVID-19 School Closure Remote Learning Plan

(Updated March 31, 2020)

The priority of the Milton Public Schools is and will always be the health and safety of its students, families, and staff members. Further, we recognize that this global health crisis is affecting every aspect of life for each member of the Milton Public Schools community. This updated remote learning plan is crafted with the realization that its implementation by educators and families at home is highly dependent on their own current state health, that of their families, and the new reality within which each is living. We remain committed to supporting every student, family, and staff member as we navigate this new reality and the implications it has for learning.

After Governor Baker announced that all schools in the Commonwealth must remain closed through May 4, 2020, the Commissioner of the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education partnered with the American Federation of Teachers, the Massachusetts Association of School Committees, the Massachusetts Association of School Superintendents, the Massachusetts Charter School Association, the Massachusetts Parent/Teacher Association, and the Massachusetts Teachers Association to author the guidance document, ***March 26, 2020 Remote Learning Recommendations During the COVID-19 School Closures***. The principles captured in that document are the foundation of the Milton Public Schools COVID19 School Closure Remote Learning Plan. We greatly appreciate your partnership with us and thank you for your continued support.

Foundational Principles

(adapted from Commissioner Riley's March 26, 2020 communication)

Our priority remains the overall well being of all of our students, families, and staff. As was the case prior to this extended school closure, the health and safety of all members of the Milton Public Schools community is paramount. Teaching and learning cannot take place in any form if basic human needs are not met. Given that, we are taking a holistic approach to supporting our students, families, and staff members. Strong, positive relationships are critical to

the learning process and so maintaining connections between students, families, and staff members is a basic tenet of this plan.

Opportunities for Learning Must be Equitable. The Milton Public Schools is firmly committed to educational excellence for all students. This value is the core of our work, regardless of whether we are in our buildings or teaching and learning from home.

Remote Learning is Necessary At This Time. We recognize that the current context within which we are facilitating learning is not only not ideal, it is incredibly stressful for all stakeholders. However, managing learning from afar, or remote learning, is necessary at this time. To be clear, remote learning is not synonymous with online learning. We are conscious of the effects of screen time on children, and therefore, as the Commissioner recommends, have crafted a plan that seeks balance between the use of technology for remote learning and other opportunities that occur offline to engage, spark curiosity, and motivate students to build skill and understanding in a variety of areas.

Remote Learning Model

As recommended by Commissioner Riley, the Milton Public Schools will provide learning opportunities that engage students in “meaningful and productive learning” for 3 to 3.5 hours a day. This does not mean that teachers will facilitate online lessons for that amount of time. Rather it means that the at-home learning opportunities available to students will take them about 3-3.5 hours each day (or 15-17.5 hours/week) to complete. How, when, and to what extent that is completed will vary from one student to the next and from one teacher to the next as every one of us is making our way through this global health crisis, and the degree to which we are directly impacted affects how we are able to manage the teaching and learning process.

Remote learning can encompass a wide variety of learning opportunities. As previously mentioned, remote learning means that learning is being directed/managed from afar. We see technology as a tool and will seek balance between its use and offline projects, activities, and other learning opportunities. As the Commissioner notes in his March 26, 2020 communication, this could include “exploring the natural world, activities to support students’ local communities (with appropriate social distancing), and engaging hands-on projects and artistic creations that stem from students’ own passions and experiences.” More specifically, remote learning tools include, “large-group video or audio conference calls, 1:1 phone or video calls (in specific approved cases), email, work packets, projects, reading lists, online learning platforms, and other resources to effectively engage with students.”

A remote learning model must include opportunities for students and families to connect with teachers and other school-based personnel such as counselors, school nurses, and administrators. As connections between school and home are even more critical now, there should be multiple opportunities for educators to connect with families and students. More specifically, implementation of this plan will result in opportunities for students and families to connect with one or more educators multiple times per week. Finally, the aforementioned 3-3.5 hours of teacher directed learning per day will include physical activity and exploration of the arts.

What Will It Look Like for My Student?

Students and families will have access to the equivalent of 15-17.5 hours of learning opportunities each week. It is important to note that the 15-17.5 hours of learning opportunities includes direct teacher contact/check ins and student independent work. Keeping the expectation for learning at home to this minimum is in recognition of the significant toll that the COVID-19 situation has taken and will continue to take on all families and teachers and is an acknowledgment that overseeing learning at-home to this degree is new territory for most parents/guardians. Our approach to remote learning has included and, in light of this new guidance, will continue to include four components:

- ❖ Posting Digital Resources, Tasks, and Projects to Google Classroom, Plus Portals, or (for elementary) posted on the [Elementary At-Home Learning Site](#).
- ❖ Developing School-Based, Classroom-based, Team-based, or Cluster-based Projects and Challenges
- ❖ Using Google Hangout/Conference Call for Virtual Meet-ups or Creating Instructional Videos/Read Alouds
- ❖ Preparing take-home packets for students to complete if they are unable to access work on a computer

The expected 15-17.5 hours of work per week can be any one or any combination of more than one of the above. The plan is that the use of online tools such as Google Classroom and video conferencing will increase over the course of this closure.

Students with special needs should be provided with the accommodations and services required to access the at-home learning opportunities that are made available to all students. These accommodations and services will “look different” to some degree from those that are captured in Individual Education Plans and 504s. Associate Senior Commissioner Russell Johnston provided guidance based on DESE’s interpretations of the [United States Department of Education Office for Civil Rights and Office of Special Education and Rehabilitation Services COVID19 Supplemental Fact Sheet](#). In short, this guidance states that:

- ❖ All students must receive an education.
- ❖ Ensuring compliance with the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) should not prevent any school from offering educational programs through distance instruction.
- ❖ Districts must provide a Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE) while protecting the health and safety of students, educators, and service providers.

In response to this updated guidance, Susan Maselli, *Administrator for Pupil Personnel and Services*, has been working with providers and our attorney to define how the Milton Public Schools will address the special education needs of its students. In general, needs will be addressed by providing accommodations to provide access to at-home learning materials, providing guidance to parents/guardians in order to best support their students, providing specially-designed materials directly to students on their caseload, and providing more direct learning opportunities such as small group online opportunities and teletherapy. It is recognized both by the MA Department of Education and by the Milton Public Schools that this last item will initially happen less frequently, but will evolve as the school closure progresses. For more specific information about the plan for special education in the Milton Public Schools, please see the parent/guardian [Special Education Remote Learning Plan](#)

If a student receives additional learning opportunities from a special educator, a reading specialist, or a math support teacher, he/she should “count” those minutes as part of the 15-17.5 hours a week. In other words, if a child is given math practice problems from a special educator and those problems take 1 hour to complete, then the student should do 1 hour less of the math assignments assigned to all students. In this way, the total amount of time spent on school assigned work and engaging with teachers will not exceed the amount recommended by the Commissioner.

For now, at-home learning activities will focus on the review, reinforcement, and, most especially, the extension and application of already learned concepts and skills. Teachers are collaboratively planning with each other and with curriculum coordinators to ensure that at-home learning opportunities are meaningful. Commissioner Riley’s recommendation is that schools avoid introducing new content as parents/guardians at home remain the primary support and instructor while school is out and nothing can replace face to face instruction with one’s teacher. That said, as we continue to make our way through this closure, we are discussing the introduction of new content and how to ensure all students are exposed to it.

In order to meet the recommendation from the jointly authored letter from Commissioner Riley, all teachers, service providers, and counselors will communicate, in some form, with their students and/or families at least 3-5 times a week. This will take many forms such as: a phone call or email to check in, a group video/phone chat to respond to questions about an

assignment, a Google Hangout to discuss a learning experience, a message sent via an online communication tool, a pre-recorded morning message, a group message posted to a Google site or PlusPortals, feedback to students, or any other form of communication. At the end of each week, each teacher will report to the principal or the assistant principal the name(s) of students who have not “shown up” online at all that week (i.e. did not respond to a message or did not upload/send a completed assignment, etc.). Building leadership will reach out to families in order to identify needs and offer support.

Teachers will provide feedback to students each week. As the ways in which students will access learning opportunities is quite varied, the ways in which students are given feedback will vary too. As part of the “at least 3-5 communications each week” described above, your child can expect feedback from his/her teacher at least two times a week. Examples of feedback might include: making comments on a piece of writing submitted electronically, engaging students in a group discussion via phone or video conference to share their new ideas based on observations they did in their backyard (with you responding to their ideas), having a phone chat with a student who is unable to use online materials and so is instead completing a hard copy packet, or an email to a student that gives praise for the number of math problems solved in an online program and direction for things to think about moving forward.

Finally, and most importantly, we are committed to ensuring that all students are able to access learning opportunities at home. The district has already implemented several steps to ensure access and will continue to do so. Please refer [Parents/Guardians/Staff- FAQs MPS](#) posted to our website for more detailed information about how to ensure your child can access at-home learning opportunities during this extended school closure.