

Darien Public Schools - Administrative Offices

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March 15, 2020

Dear Families and Staff,

Good evening. I am writing with an update on the most recent information on the District's plan to implement its eLearning Plan. Thank you for your understanding and collective efforts to keep our school community and town safe while simultaneously providing continuity of learning for all students during the period of school closure. The District continues to work closely with the First Selectman's Office and local health officials during this crisis.

eLearning

eLearning experiences can incorporate a combination of synchronous and asynchronous activities. As shared with you on Friday, the Commissioner of Education's strong recommendation was for districts not to conduct remote learning experiences in lieu of onsite schooling but rather to provide supplemental asynchronous activities.

The main reason for this recommendation was a district's ability to deliver with fidelity the educational services to all students as prescribed by state and federal laws. Given this requirement and consistent with recently released guidance from The United States Department of Education, Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services, the District currently has not submitted a waiver to provide on line learning experiences in lieu of onsite schooling.

In consultation with the Commissioner of Education over the weekend, it is likely that Connecticut schools will be closed for a much longer period of time than the two weeks. As such, given the exceptional nature of the circumstances, the Commissioner is also reconsidering its position on granting waivers for remote eLearning that count toward the 180 days of school. It is now likely the State Department of Education will encourage eLearning and require a district to make a good a faith effort to meet the educational needs of all its regular and special education students.

Given these changing circumstances around school closures and the expectations for waivers and educational eLearning for all students, I will be making an administrative recommendation to the Board of Education tomorrow, Monday, March 16th at 6:30 p.m. to submit a waiver for the District's eLearning experiences. Should a waiver be granted, the District will be ready to easily transition into providing online eLearning for students that count towards the 180 days of schools. The timeline for submission and acceptance of a waiver is quick, generally 24 hours.

The staff has already designed rich and varied asynchronous eLearning activities that students can access at their own pace and convenience. Resources are accessible for all students in both general and special education. The eLearning resources can be accessed from the main page on the District website tomorrow morning: Monday, March 16th at 8:00 a.m. These activities are voluntary and students are not required to participate. The activities are not intended to replace classroom instruction. The goal is to offer opportunities for students to access enrichment, practice skills, maintain learning and keep connected to school.

Thank you for your continued understanding and assistance as we navigate the upcoming weeks. District administrators and I will continue to provide you with regular updates during the period that schools are closed. You will receive information from each of your children's school principals tonight outlining expectations for accessing tomorrow' s enrichment experiences.

Challenges in life can often provide opportunities. Offering remote learning provides our students, staff and school community a chance to try out its eLearning Plan, 1-1 technology infrastructure and teaching practices. Should a waiver be granted, I am confident, with your assistance, that this will prove to be a unique and beneficial learning opportunity for everyone. Please see attached some additional information about COVID-19 and eLearning that you might find helpful.

Sincerely,

Alan Addley

Dr. Alan Addley

Superintendent of Schools