

Superintendent Update (3/25/20)

Good Evening,

I am aware that you are receiving a large amount of email communication from the School Department and I appreciate your understanding of our need to stay connected with students, families and staff during this school closure. This is most certainly a time of stress and anxiety for everyone as none of us have ever experienced an interruption to both school and life on a global scale.

As of 3:30pm today, Governor Baker has ordered that all schools now remain closed through the month of April with a new opening date of: May 4, 2020.

Our goal is to continue to update everyone as we continue to work with the Department of Education and advocate for answers to the concerns of our students, families and staff. This is being accomplished by daily Massachusetts Superintendent group conversations, structured weekly phone conferences with the Massachusetts Commissioner of Education, daily conversations and virtual meetings with WPS staff and ongoing updates to our students and families.

As we navigate this unprecedented time, school districts are seeking the guidance and support of the Commissioner of Education, Jeffrey Riley, to assist with the development of expectations of learning for all students during the closure to ensure equity among our communities and student populations. To date, the Commissioner has explicitly communicated that school districts cannot substitute online learning for face-to-face instruction. Replicating the school day is impossible and attempting to do so would present challenges of equity among our communities and student population. School districts were directed to provide opportunities for continued learning in grades K-12 as a resource for parents to allow students to stay connected to learning during the closure. Initially, and as guided by the Commissioner, public-school districts provided families with lists of curriculum resources as a guiding document to encourage a continuation of learning during the closure. These were the first set of documents that the WPS posted to individual school websites. As educators, we understand that these resources are not equivalent to what students would be learning in a classroom and the concern that this presents regarding grade level achievement. As time is passing, we also understand that parents, families, students and staff are becoming anxious about what lies ahead in terms of a return date and the impact of lost school days among other things.

The Massachusetts Superintendents anticipate an update from the Commissioner at the end of this week to help clarify and/or answer some important frequently asked questions. We will be providing you with updates as soon as we are notified.

In the meantime, and given the concern that there is a possibility of a State ordered extension of school closure time, our entire school staff has been working on creating additional guidance for families that will include a more ***Structured Daily Learning Focus Guide K-8*** (this will look different for each school depending on grade levels) to assist families in keeping students focused on a daily basis by subject area, with the goal of

staying engaged at a level that is commensurate with their classmates. We are updating this information daily and will post the information related the new ***Structured Daily Learning Focus Guides_K-8_*** as it is completed and no later than Monday. Grades 9-12 will continue with a similar guided plan using the current platforms for posting recommended and focused learning opportunities.

Please click the link below to view the learning opportunities for your students. It is strongly recommended that you visit your students school webpage as information is continually updating.

Winthrop High School
Winthrop Middle School
Arthur T. Cummings
Gorman Fort Banks

I would like to thank all of you for making it possible for the Community of Winthrop to follow our state and local directives and for your willingness to stay connected as we navigate this unanticipated event in our lives. Please reach out to your student's Principal or teacher if you have any questions or concerns and they will provide you with the guidance needed. Please continue to do your part to abide by the "Stay-at-Home" advisory and continue to practice social distancing. Stay safe and in touch.

Sincerely,
Lisa A. Howard, Superintendent of Schools