

April 2020

MIDDLE SCHOOL REMOTE LEARNING GUIDING PRINCIPLES

The intent of this document is to share the remote learning plan for Saltonstall grades 6-8 and Collins Middle School. During this unprecedented time, we need to lean heavily on the core values that guide the work at each middle school. Saltonstall PRIDE values caring, teamwork, effort, responsibility, and making a difference. For Collins, the core values of communication, cooperation, and trust will guide us. That being said, the safety and well-being of students, families, and staff has been and will continue to be our top priority as an educational community. We are focused not only on physical health, safety, and nutrition, but also on social-emotional and mental health needs, which could intensify during this time.

The learning and work that students produce during this closure matters to their individual educational growth. Using this time to firm up lagging skills, as well as practice more recently learned skills, will make a difference when we return to school. Staying connected and engaged, showing care, effort, teamwork, and being responsible during this time will make a significant difference in the educational life of every student. Our remote learning plan is guided by our core values and key aspects of our guiding principles that speak directly to equity and engagement. We feel that equity and engagement are critical to our remote learning plan.

What equity means for remote learning:

- Instruction should strive to be equitable and inclusive.
- In a remote environment, we must approach our instruction from this perspective:
 - How do we make the work as inclusive as possible? Who is not able to access this work? How can we overcome the obstacle?
- The remote learning world has many obstacles, but we can't let those obstacles prevent us from creating learning experiences for students. We must limit gaps in learning and remain focused on inclusivity.
- Equity means providing options to students that meet their individual circumstances (i.e. If the internet is the barrier, then we create a plan that does not involve the internet).
- We must be careful not to disadvantage students for what happens during our closure, especially those who are in situations out of their control. We should track completed work and provide feedback.
- Engaging students and keeping in contact with them will be our best form of accountability.
- Not all teachers of all courses need to be doing the exact same thing, but all teachers should follow the principles of engagement and equity outlined herein.

What engagement means for remote learning:

- Engaging and communicating with students is the key for all we do in a remote learning environment. Engagement will maintain a connection to the school community.
- Continuous contact needs to be a part of our remote learning routine.
- We must provide opportunities for both teacher-to-student and student-to-student interactions in an academic setting. Providing ample time for collaboration will further aid our engagement efforts.
- Keeping students and families connected will help make up for the less than ideal learning conditions that remote instruction allows.

Salem,

THE IMPORTANT COMPONENTS OF REMOTE LEARNING

1. Schedules

Here is an explanation of the schedules for this new context:

Remote learning requires flexibility. However, creating some structure while remaining flexible will allow us to do the hard work of scheduling outside of the traditional school model. The basic schedule provided below is intended to reserve time for teachers to meet and interact with students and for students of particular classes to meet with each other.

Teachers are not required to be “in front of students” during their “classroom hours” as outlined on the schedule. Teachers are not expected to run an online class for a full period/classroom time on any particular day. This time can be used for any number of learning experiences: short virtual class meetings, introducing and explaining academic tasks, sharing resources, asking students to read a document or view a video, giving time for students to answer a problem or respond to a prompt (either digitally or non-digitally), giving students time to collaborate with one another, reflecting on those learning experiences, etc.

We have created two classroom “periods” per day where teachers are available to conference with students (small groups), hold class meetings, answer questions via email or an online chat, give feedback on assignments, and review content with students. Students can check in and interact with teachers during classroom periods. Students can reach teachers via email, Google Classroom, and Schoology.

We recognize that a remote learning environment poses challenges for everyone, and that personal circumstances might occasionally require greater flexibility than outlined in the schedule. That said, engaging students is essential in a remote learning environment and our priority should be interacting with students and being available to them on a daily basis. For that reason, we have created a schedule that seeks to promote engagement and interaction to the greatest extent possible.

We want students to know that their teachers are accessible to them. If someone was not available in the morning, then there will be another opportunity in the afternoon. Again, teachers can do a number of things in a number of modalities in this timeframe: communicate with students individually or small groups, provide clarification, offer help sessions (in various formats from a Google Meet to a shared document to a Nearpod session), etc.

Here are the basic schedules for Saltonstall and Collins (Mon-Fri), showing you the times that teachers will be available online and the suggested blocks for students to do their assignments: [Schedules](#)

2. Our Focus for Learning:

Teachers will continue to deepen understanding and reinforce skills that have previously been taught until they are ready to move forward with the curriculum. In order to provide some normalcy and consistency for students, teachers will move forward with the curriculum in some instances, although expectations for content will be modified significantly due to our remote learning schedule and the need to continue to offer

enrichment opportunities. Equity is our main goal, working to ensure that lessons are accessible to the range of learners in our classrooms. Remote learning does not just mean online learning. We will consider the amount of screen time we are expecting of students and will balance this with other activities that allow for self-directed learning, choice and access to other disciplines (physical education, music, art, technology electives) that support the whole child. Students should be able to complete most assignments independently, and parents should provide a level of support similar to what is required for homework. We recognize that many parents are working from home, and it can be difficult to take on the role of teacher. With this in mind, our remote learning model is set up to provide students with some structure, routine, opportunities for academic engagement and meaningful connections with teachers for instruction and support.

3. Expectations for Students:

All students are expected to actively engage in the remote learning opportunities assigned by their teacher(s). Over the first weeks of the closure everyone was adjusting to our “new normal”. We are now expecting that all students will be engaged as they would if they were in school. While traditional grades will not be given at this time, we will track student engagement and provide students with feedback on their work. Providing meaningful and timely feedback for students to be actively engaged will be one of our priorities. Students who are not engaged will be contacted by their teachers and/or support staff to encourage participation and offer assistance.

In addition, if at any time a teacher or parent becomes concerned that a student is disengaging or struggling emotionally, he or she will reach out to the other to coordinate additional support and resources for the student. Nothing is more important than students feeling connected to the people who care about their well-being. Students should plan to spend up to 3.5 hours per day on remote learning activities. Teachers will convey expectations for time spent to students and families directly. The scheduling of remote learning is at the discretion of the family, unless there are specifically scheduled remote meetings, lessons or classes that are arranged with the teachers. Students are expected to behave in accordance with school rules while participating in remote learning. Cyberbullying, harassment and abuse of the remote learning process will not be tolerated and may result in suspension from remote learning, as well as additional consequences when school resumes. Adherence to the Acceptable Use Policy is expected. Students should select a place in their home where they can participate in any remote learning opportunities. We encourage students to be mindful of their online presence and the need to protect people’s right to privacy.

4. Feedback and Grading

Students will not receive traditional grades at this time. Instead they will receive feedback based on criteria such as teacher developed rubrics, grade level standards, and learning objectives. As part of the feedback process, students will have the opportunity to self-reflect on their level of learning, and teachers will consider this as part of the assessment process. Student engagement will be tracked. I want to reinforce that students are expected to complete the activities assigned by their teachers. If needed, students may ask for assistance with issues that may be hampering their progress. In times like these, we are mindful that our staff, students and families are all dealing with this public health crisis in different ways. As much as we might want to move full steam ahead with remote learning, we also want to be sure that no students are left behind. We are

constantly adjusting to this new learning environment and will continue to evaluate and adjust the feedback to students and families regarding the work students are doing in the remote learning environment. We will share information that speaks to how much of the assigned work a student is doing while also giving feedback that will help students improve.

5. Supporting our Staff

We also need to be transparent and clear that we are asking our staff to learn new skills and technologies in real time. Not only are they up for the challenge but they are already excelling at creating quality remote learning opportunities. In order to support their continued growth, we are offering a revised professional development plan, tailored to our current situation. These new professional development opportunities will be focused on remote learning skills and technologies as well as equity and access. The offerings will be differentiated into novice and advanced sessions, based on people's current skill in a given area of development.

6. Supporting our Students

In accordance with federal and state law, students with special needs will receive services in accordance with their IEP and the requirements of FAPE. Services will be adapted remotely to the extent possible as part of our remote learning plan. The special education liaison for your child will work with parents to create schedules that work for all parties.

Classroom teachers, math and reading interventionists, counselors and other support staff will meet regularly and work together to support students who might be in need of academic assistance and or social emotional support. Students and parents should reach out with any questions or concerns to the staff member with whom your child has worked.

In Closing

We want to reiterate the novelty of this situation and the many challenges that we will face together as we move forward in this new remote learning environment. We want to thank all of our staff as they have risen to the big challenges that have come about abruptly. We want to recognize their flexibility and commitment to caring for and educating our middle school students. We also want to thank our families for their patience, flexibility, and tireless work at home to support their children. We understand that our work is not perfect, and we will continue to encounter obstacles that we will work together with you, our families, to overcome. Thank you and be safe!

Michael Lister
Principal
Saltonstall School

Matthew Condon
Principal
Collins Middle School