

WESTWOOD PUBLIC SCHOOLS
Honoring Tradition, Inspiring Excellence, Shaping the Future
DEERFIELD ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

JOSHUA C. BAUMER
Principal

April 2, 2020

Dear Deerfield Families,

I am reaching out with some details about our transition to a new phase of remote learning. On Monday, April 6th, we will move beyond review and enrichment and start introducing new concepts and skills. While we all know that distance learning cannot replace the experience of in-person classes, our staff have been working hard to maintain the sense of joy and connectedness that characterizes our elementary classroom communities.

We will be “learning from home” until at least May 4th. During that time, here are some of the structures that will be in place:

Attendance

We will be recording attendance daily based on student participation. Our expectation is that students engage in lessons with some support from their families. We understand that each household faces challenges. Many parents/guardians are balancing the demands of working from home and supervising kids’ learning activities. Some may be dealing with illness, as well.

- If your child is struggling to participate in lessons, please reach out to the classroom teacher, special educator, or principal.
- If your child is unable to participate due to sickness or another family reason, please contact Mrs. Steverman and your child’s classroom teacher via email, as you normally would to report an absence from school.

Daily Instruction

Guidance from the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education released Friday suggests that students engage in remote learning for about half the amount of time they would typically be in school. For Westwood elementary students, that means about 2 - 2.5 hours of core academic learning per day and another 1 - 1.5 hours of physical and creative activity.

Core academic learning is likely to include many of the following each day:

- Watching video instruction
- Reading, either online or in a book at home
- Completing written assignments for math, literacy, science and social studies
- Working with teachers and instructional support staff in small-group video sessions
- Engaging in hands-on activities that support learning
- Conducting internet or book-based research

In order to help students focus on a few key concepts and skills per day, teachers will alternate between core subjects Monday - Thursday. On Fridays, students will have the chance to review, practice, and apply their learning from earlier in the week and engage in explicit lessons related to social-emotional learning (SEL). A template for a student's week will typically look like this:

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Morning Meeting	Morning Meeting	Morning Meeting	Morning Meeting	Morning Meeting
Literacy	Math	Literacy	Math	Review/ Practice
Recess	Recess	Recess	Recess	Recess
Social Studies	Science	Social Studies	Science	SEL
Special	Special	Special	Special	Special
Afternoon Wrap Up	Afternoon Wrap Up	Afternoon Wrap Up	Afternoon Wrap Up	Afternoon Wrap Up

This model will also give students the chance to continue to participate in “specials” activities (art, library, music, physical education and grade 3 coding). For Week 3, our specialists will continue to offer choice-based activities as part of the remote learning plan. In the future, we anticipate offering special classes throughout the week. Finally, this schedule will continue to promote classroom connection and opportunities to practice SEL competencies through morning meetings and other check-in activities.

Student Support

As we move toward a more academically challenging version of remote learning, we want to make sure that all students receive the support they need to learn and grow.

Special Education

Next week, our special educators and instructional assistants will continue to support students in order to ensure access to new learning. They will also begin to schedule and provide direct services. [Please see the linked letter HERE from the Student Services Department here for many more details.](#) While it will take a little time to adjust, and the service delivery will look different in the remote learning environment, our student services team is working incredibly hard to make sure all kids get what they need to make progress.

ELL Support

Our English language teachers will continue their outreach efforts to families and to provide direct support for our English language learners. They will also be connecting with classroom teachers to modify curriculum and provide classroom-based supports as needed.

Counseling and Mental Health

We know that student mental health support is a critical part of the school day for many of our students. Our school psychologists will continue their outreach efforts to families and to provide support to the students with whom they work. In addition, our school psychologists are a resource available to all students and families in need of support at this time and throughout the remote learning period. Please contact your child's principal if you would like our school psychologist, Mrs. McDonald, to reach out to you.

Maintaining a Daily Schedule

Many of the instructional activities offered will be available for students to access at whatever time of day works for the family. A few will be "live" opportunities for students to engage directly via videoconference with their teachers and fellow students. A daily schedule is a tool that some families have found to be reassuring for kids who find comfort in regular routines. As an example, we are sharing a sample daily schedule for students in grades K - 5. We know this sample schedule won't work for every student and family. It is intended to be a useful tool for providing students, teachers, and families a sense of continuity. To access the sample schedule, please click on the following link: [Elementary Remote Learning Sample Schedule](#)

We want to acknowledge that for some families now, and for others in the weeks and months ahead, school work will need to take a back seat to the more urgent matters of health and safety. Our goal is to be here for you and your children whenever school is possible in your daily routines. We also know that this is a brand new approach for all of us, and it won't be perfect. Thankfully, we have a great staff, wonderful students, and a supportive community. Together, we'll find our way. Please reach out if you have any questions or need any support during this time.

In closing, I want to let you know that I will be scheduling a virtual principal's coffee hour each week. You will receive a separate email early next week with information on meeting times and information on how to sign up. It will be a great chance to connect with other parents, ask questions, and share your thoughts about how our remote learning model is working so far.

Thank you so much,
Josh