Dear Parents, Guardians, Staff, and Community Members,

On Friday, April 17, Governor Larry Hogan and State Superintendent of Schools Karen Salmon announced that Maryland public schools would remain closed until May 15, 2020. This extended closure helps ensure the safety and well-being of students, staff, and members of the community.

Even though our buildings will be closed for at least another month, we are prepared to support students through our online learning model and meal service program.

We know that the state’s decision to extend school closure has created challenges for our families. Our schools are at the heart of our county and community. Please know that in addition to student learning, we will continue to support the physical, social-emotional, and psychological needs of our students.

Below are important updates on several important areas, including what to expect for the next phase of online learning, the school calendar, grading, and other additional updates. We encourage you to visit our online learning webpage frequently to view important updates and resources.

Please continue to stay safe and take care of one another.

Sincerely,

Jeffrey A. Lawson, Ed.D.
Superintendent of Schools
School Calendar

On Tuesday, April 14, the Maryland State Board of Education voted to waive the requirement that schools hold 180 days of instruction. CCPS will be updating the school calendar in the coming weeks based on the State Board’s decision to waive five of the ten emergency closure days from March 16 to March 27. This means we will only need to make up five days to meet the new minimum number of instructional days (175 days).

The Cecil County Board of Education took the first steps in this by amending the CCPS school calendar to make April 27 and April 28 instructional days. These days were originally scheduled to be Professional Development followed by Election Day. This will allow us to “make up” two of the five days required by the state. We are working on a plan for the remaining three days pending additional decisions at the state level.

What to Expect: Next Phase of Online Learning in CCPS

On Monday, April 20, we began the next phase of our online learning plan. We continue to focus on providing instruction and meeting learning objectives; leveraging the tools and resources that students have access to, and providing the academic and social-emotional support students need. The main focus of these lessons is continuing learning while at home with teachers providing feedback. Our online learning model includes a blend of approaches to learning activities; independent, self-paced work; virtual office hours to check for understanding; and the electronic submission of assignments. Assignments are available on the At Home Connection.

At the elementary level:
- The lessons for ELA, math, science, and social studies are designed to be completed in approximately 25 minute segments twice a week.
- Elementary Specials -- art, music, PE, IA, and Informational Literacy/Computer Science -- are designed to provide approximately 25 minutes of activities per week. These are enrichment activities that do not need to be submitted to the teacher.
- The lessons do not have to be done on a specific day or time. While students should follow the lessons for each content area in order, they can work on different content areas in the order that best suits them.
- Printed packets are available and can be requested by contacting the school. However, packets are only generated for families who are not able to access instruction online.

At the secondary level:
• The main focus of these lessons is continuing learning while at home. Teachers will provide feedback on the work being completed; it will be graded on a Pass/Incomplete basis.
• The lessons for each content area are intended to take 40 minutes two times a week.
• The lessons do not have to be done on a specific day or time. While students should follow the lessons for each content area in order, they can work on different content areas in the order that best suits them.
• Packets will be available at the school at designated times for anyone without online access. Please contact your school to make an appointment for a pickup time.

Students can submit their assignments via the platform their teachers use or by email. Although teachers will introduce new content and assignments for students to complete, it is important to remember that the work students complete and the feedback teachers provide during this time is not meant to replace the day-to-day instruction that students would have received at school.

Our goal is to maintain key aspects of the classroom experience: engaging with content, collaborating with peers, receiving support from staff, and moving forward in the learning process through assignments and feedback. The learning experiences are meant to maintain a continuity of learning; facilitate and track progress; and encourage students to challenge themselves and grow in their knowledge. The scheduled office hours are an important time to connect with teachers, engage in additional learning, and receive support as needed.

Grading and Reporting Framework

Third Marking Period Grades
Grades for the third marking period will be reported using the traditional grading system. CCPS is currently exploring options for the delivery of the 3rd marking period report cards. More information will be provided soon.

Fourth Marking Period Grades
Over the past several weeks, CCPS has explored grading and reporting options for the 4th marking period. This is a complex decision that requires thoughtful planning and collaboration. The work has included reviewing the approaches of other public school districts and soliciting feedback from various stakeholders. We have determined that a traditional grading system based on percentages and letter grades will not serve the best interests of all students during this period of online learning. We want to ensure that our grading system has a positive impact and can only help our students’ academic standing.
As is the case with any grading policy, there is no perfect grading system, which is amplified even more now during a very stressful time for families. However, we believe the following strategies will let us know if students are learning, without penalizing them for the impact the pandemic may be having on their families. We are currently working with stakeholders to ensure a smooth transition to this system and ensure that teachers and students understand the criteria for success. We understand that there will be many questions about implications of this grading approach, and those questions will be answered as we continue to move forward.

Letter grades will not be assigned for the 4th marking period. A reporting system using “Pass/Incomplete” is being developed. We believe that this grading approach will ensure fairness and equity for all students while also engaging students in the curriculum, providing meaningful feedback, and tracking their progress.

**Elementary Students**
The emphasis will be on engaging students in learning experiences and connecting with and engaging as many students as possible. To ensure students are progressing and meeting learning objectives, we will:

- Provide students with the opportunity to engage in a variety of learning experiences.
- Provide constructive feedback to students and their parents/guardians.
- Provide teachers with information so that when students return to school, they will know which skills to work on, and how to engage them in learning at the next grade level.

**Secondary Students:**
We believe that traditional grading practices will not best serve all students and a more universal approach is needed. More information about implementation of this system, including how the final semester grade will be reported on transcripts, will be provided in the coming weeks.

**Student Attendance and Accountability**

Although daily student attendance will not be taken in traditional ways, teachers and school administrators will monitor student engagement and participation. This will be tracked in a number of ways, including:

- Assignment completion
- Students attending live sessions or virtual “office hours”
- Email or phone calls with students/parents/guardians
- Requests for paper packets for students who do not have the ability to engage online

We want to stress that student engagement and participation in remote learning is critical. If your child(ren) is having trouble engaging in online learning, please contact their counselor or a school administrator as soon as possible. You can also submit a question or concern here.
CCPS Support Request Form

The Office of Student Services has developed a form for students and families to request additional support or resources for topics such as Academic Support, College/Career Guidance, Personal/Social Support, Mental Health Resources, Family Support Resources, Community Resource Support. The form can be located HERE or on www.ccps.org.

State Requirements for the Class of 2020 and Graduation

On April 14, the State Board of Education voted to waive state testing requirements for high school seniors. They also voted to waive the requirements for Student Service Learning (SSL) hours. CCPS staff are meeting to discuss potential alternative graduation celebrations to honor 2020 graduates. More information will be communicated in the coming weeks.

Updates to the Meal Service Program

This month CCPS consolidated meal distribution to two days as a precautionary measure in consideration of social distancing. Details on times, dates, and locations can be found on the Coronavirus webpage.

Face Coverings

As a reminder, Governor Hogan’s executive order requires the use of a face-covering while in public places. Individuals picking up meals and Chromebooks should wear a cloth or other material that covers their nose and mouth, such as a cloth face covering, face mask, dust mask, homemade mask, scarf, bandana, or handkerchief.

Online Safety

In an effort to safeguard our students while they are using the internet at home and working on school work through their CCPS accounts, we have begun to implement the Bark for Schools (https://www.bark.us/) internet filtering and account monitoring. There is no substitute for
parent involvement, but in these unprecedented times, we believe it is important to support families by providing an additional layer of protection. Bark for Schools allows us to protect our students from inappropriate internet content and monitors student activity in their GMail and GDrive to ensure they are safe and appropriate online.

When students log in, they will see a new extension that looks like a little dog. That means the Bark extension is active. Bark only works on a CCPS account and does not impact personal non-CCPS accounts. If your child uses your computer at home, be sure they set up a separate profile in Chrome so Bark can protect him/her. Watch this video to see how: https://vimeo.com/276250403/d37a0673e4