



MALDEN PUBLIC SCHOOLS
77 Salem Street, Malden, MA 02148
Phone: 781-397-6100 Fax: 781-397-7276
www.maldenps.org

John Oteri, M.Ed.
Superintendent of Schools

Kelly Chase, Ed.D.
Michael L. Wood, CAGS
Assistant Superintendents of Schools

April 3, 2020

Dear Malden Public Schools Families,

I hope this finds you healthy and safe. I think of our Malden School community all the time during this crisis. Everything that has occurred in the past few weeks has been a fast-paced adjustment for all of us which began with the closure of our schools on Friday, March 13, with the hope we would reopen on April 7. Our first priority during this closure was to continue to provide breakfast and lunch to our students, which we did, seamlessly beginning on Monday, March 16. Next, we worked diligently to provide the engagement and enrichment resources on our website, launching the Malden Online Engagement Resources on March 18. Last week when the Governor extended the school closure through May 4, we began an earnest effort to provide technology to our families who lacked a device. We followed up by distributing nearly 700 Chromebooks. Most recently, we worked to provide the next phase of learning while schools are out of session - Remote Learning. None of these accomplishments could happen without the hard work and dedication of so many individuals coming together to meet the needs of our Malden families; we are thankful to have the support of so many.

We know that we cannot replicate the traditional school day under these new circumstances, but we do want to reaffirm our commitment to all of our students - socially, emotionally and academically. Despite the challenges of not being in school - where all of our students' needs are met - we still need to continue learning, albeit, this time, remotely. The Malden Remote Learning Plan has been developed to provide meaningful and productive opportunities that keep students connected to their learning community. Our plan is flexible and creative, and supports our students, staff, and families.

Thank you for your patience and your support of the Malden Public Schools community. We know we are a work in progress and that we will make mistakes along the way. We, the educators that we are, will assess and retool this during our time away from our school buildings. Together we will get through this crisis. We look forward to hearing from you and updating you in the coming days and weeks.

Stay healthy

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "John Oteri".

John Oteri, Superintendent

Malden Public Schools

Remote Learning Plan

April 2020

Context

Late on Wednesday, March 25th, Governor Baker announced that schools in Massachusetts would close until at least May 4th. In the two days that followed, members of central office participated in a number of conference calls to gather information about expectations for learning going forward. At the state level, Commissioner Riley brought together representatives from a number of stakeholder groups - unions, parent-teacher organizations, superintendents, and school committee members- to develop a set of guidelines that would inform the development of district learning plans.

On our end, we have met multiple times as an administrative team and with the Malden Education Association leadership to brainstorm ideas about what remote learning could look like in our district. In turn, members of the administrative team have been in regular contact with educators from their respective buildings, holding conversations about what teaching, learning, and connecting with students looks like while we are physically far apart. In each and every conversation, one theme is ever-present: that we value, miss, and love our students and families. We want to provide them with the support they need to remain both engaged in meaningful learning that is connected to the school community, and we care about the social-emotional well-being of the entire educational community in Malden. What follows is our entry into the world of remote learning. We approach this work with a growth mindset, a lens on equity and access, a commitment to addressing students' social-emotional and academic needs, and a desire to learn alongside our staff, students, and families as we embark on this new learning journey.

We look forward to learning with you and from you, and we will be in touch in the coming days to hear your feedback and use it to refine and strengthen our plan. Around mid-April we will convene a group of stakeholders to review feedback and develop next steps for moving forward.

Department of Elementary and Secondary Guiding Principles for Remote Learning

Commissioner Riley shared a set of guiding principles related to remote learning. [Please access his letter here for the full document.](#)

Commissioner Riley Letter to Families

[English](#)

[Portuguese](#)

[Chinese](#)

[Haitian Creole](#)

[Spanish](#)

[Vietnamese](#)

Malden Public Schools' Approach to Remote Learning: A Lens on Equity and Access

1. We are a “work in progress.” **This approach to learning is new to all of us**, and it is important to remember that all of us - educators, parents, students, and administrators - are learning together. Will there be bumps along the way? You can bet on that! But you can also buckle up and get ready for some awesome opportunities to engage in learning in new ways, to connect with staff members using different mediums, and to spend quality time as a family where the schedule is a bit more flexible.
2. **We come to this work from a variety of starting points.** Some of our educators, parents, and students are technology whizzes; others are novices. Some love working with a virtual platform and others are trying to make things work with limited technology. We have heard feedback that all-online is the way to go - and the opposite - that too much screen time is a serious worry. We have responded with a plan that we believe promotes **a balance of both online and offline opportunities.**
3. We need to embrace the notion that we all have families and remember that the reason for this pivot to remote learning is driven by a virus that does not discriminate, a virus that will undoubtedly affect many of us. To that end, we have developed **a plan that allows for flexibility.** We know that many parents are still working outside of the home, some are trying to work from home (often with children dancing around them as a conference call takes place!), and still others are taking care of sick relatives. Our educators are in the same boat, facing the very same demands as our Malden families, so flexibility is a must as we navigate this new territory. We have worked hard to establish a set of expectations to help you understand what to expect in the coming weeks.
4. **Connection to our students is our first priority.** We miss our Malden students and families and can't wait to see them in person! We think about them often and hope that you remain in good spirits and good health! We have always approached teaching and learning through a social-emotional lens. Our focus has and will be the whole child. We want to take care of basic needs, especially social-emotional ones, in order to ensure learning can occur. We will be reaching out regularly with a goal of making contact - through email, phone, or virtual meetings - with every Malden Public Schools family. We are here for you if you need help meeting the challenges of remote learning - or any other challenge you are facing at this time. On our end, you can expect a team approach from our educators. Much like this crisis, we will get through this together. We hope to enlist as many educators as possible from grade level teams and support staff in order to weave a fabric of collaboration and support. We know our staff have had their lives impacted by this crisis as well and may need to step away for a time; by uniting as a staff, we hope to provide a comprehensive and flexible remote learning experience.

Purpose of Remote Learning

We believe that connection to our students is paramount in this challenging period. In light of this unprecedented crisis, we believe that it is of utmost importance to **connect with students and their families** to promote thoughtful, appropriate learning and engagement throughout the time we are away from our beloved learning communities. Our approach is to provide a variety of learning opportunities - through a lens of equity and access - that will engage students in deeper learning of material introduced up until the point we left our buildings.

Malden Public Schools’ Working Definition of Remote Learning

Many definitions of remote learning are floating around now that we have entered this new territory. To help families understand how we in Malden Public Schools think about remote learning, we offer the following:

Remote learning IS...	Remote Learning IS NOT...
...flexible learning that does not have a rigid, fixed schedule.	...six hours in front of a screen each day.
...a combination of both online and non-digital learning activities.	...a learning experience where a teacher is on screen every day for a class period while students participate in the class in real-time.
...a broader understanding of learning, encompassing skills and talents which normally might fall outside the frameworks.	... a one-size-fits-all approach, but instead is an approach that allows for the flexibility needed to meet student, staff, and family needs.
...learning that can be interdisciplinary and/or project-based, or take a more traditional line of essays and responses to text.	...learning that requires a family member to serve as a full-time instructor (but we WILL need your support!).
...learning that deepens and enhances understanding of concepts already taught, fine tunes skills and expands students’ repertoire of tools.	...a replication of the traditional learning environment.
... is a method of study where teachers and students do not meet in a classroom, (M. Webster, 2020). It may include online learning using the internet, emails, and other instructional resources, such as books, audio, video, and graphic displays that allow the student to access the content of instruction, (E. Britannica, 2020).	

Ultimately, we want our staff, students, and families to be healthy and safe. We want to stay in contact with our students throughout this difficult time. We want students to feel connected to their learning community and to understand that Malden educators are here for them every step of the way. **We want students to be engaged in learning activities each day for part of the day**, regardless of that entry point into the work.

Expectations for Staff for Remote Learning

*In general and, at a minimum, the following is expected of **all MPS Educators**:*

- Learning activities should be a deeper dive / reinforcement of material taught earlier in the year, coupled with enrichment activities. While some activities can be accessed online, we recognize the need to limit screen time and will be working to help identify activities that do not require a device.
- Teachers' weekly learning plans for each content area will be shared with families at the beginning of each week (by 8 a.m. on Monday morning). This will allow families to coordinate/organize for the week.
- Plan for about half of what would be expected of students if they were in a traditional school environment.
- Teachers will communicate regularly with students to maintain a sense of classroom community. (Please see section below on "office hours" and "length of day" for more specific information.)
- Teachers will communicate with building administration regarding students with whom they are unable to "check in."
- Teachers will provide feedback to students for work submitted. Work will receive credit but will not be graded on a traditional grading scale. Completed work will receive a "P" in the gradebook; teachers will leave the entry blank if the assignment is not turned in.
- Weekly virtual meeting/call with grade level / discipline team to collaborate on learning plans.
- Weekly virtual meeting/call with building administration.
- All staff invited to IEP meetings are expected to participate if feasible.
- All Staff in student support roles of special education are expected to collaborate with classroom teachers to provide specialized instruction ideas for how the material can be presented. They should communicate with classroom teachers weekly to get input on what issues are arising for their students well as with building administration regarding students with whom they are unable to "check in."

*At a minimum, the following is expected of **Education Support Professionals**:*

- Check MPS email daily.
- If students or families reach out to you, forward the email both to the teacher you work with and the principal in your building.
- Collaborate with teachers and administrative staff via email, video-conferencing, and/or phone calls when able to and/or necessary.

Expectations for Students and Families for Remote Learning

- Malden students and families should familiarize themselves with Google Meets and Google Classroom to the extent possible - we know that many of you are learning, too!
- Families should be aware of how their teacher(s) will be communicating with them and become familiar with that platform.
- It would be helpful, especially for our youngest learners, if family could help review the learning plan shared at the beginning of the week.
- Families should do their best to be available at the scheduled times that related service providers and counselors have arranged; please communicate with us if a scheduled meeting time no longer works for you.
- Families should review work completed for thoroughness and completion and help students submit work when necessary.
- Students should complete their work to the best of their ability. Work that is turned in will receive a “P”; students who do not complete work will show a blank in the gradebook. Grading is explained in more detail in the section on *Grading in Third and Fourth Quarters*.

It is critical that students engage in learning during this alternate remote learning period and that they continue to make connections to support their social-emotional well-being. We will eventually make a return to the classroom and want to make that return as smooth as possible. Students who do not complete their work and did not reach out to their teacher(s) to discuss will be contacted by a member of the administrative or student support team to see if there are needs that we can help address.

Malden Public Schools Remote Learning Start Date

You can expect MPS Remote Learning to start on Monday, April 6th. **Please be mindful that this first week is intended to ease folks back into school mode within this new normal.** For many participants - both adults and children - this is the very first time they will be stepping into remote learning. This first week will allow us to see what challenges arise and create a plan to address those challenges. At the end of the week, we will solicit feedback from staff, students, and parents to see how the first week felt to different stakeholders and to make appropriate adjustments.

It is also important to note that we will engage in a slow roll-out during our first week, focusing on core content classes and then adding exploratory classes in subsequent weeks. This will allow for families to ease into the new routine while providing time for our exploratory teachers (who see hundreds of students during their cycle) to thoughtfully plan for large numbers of students.

Educator Office Hours and Length of Day

Just as different family dynamics necessitate a flexible learning plan, our educators have family responsibilities as well and also need flexibility. To that end, the school day in general will look different. Teachers will not be expected to adhere to traditional school day hours. They will, however, hold an “office hours” type of session **at least two times per week** (during traditional work hours) so that students and families can connect and feel a sense of classroom community. Depending on what works for their classes, educators will connect with families through mediums such as Google, email, or phone calls. The duration of these sessions should be of a length that allows for all students to have thoughtful meaningful interactions that help maintain a sense of community.

We want to make sure that all of our students and families have the support they need to meet the challenges of learning at home. Teachers who are not able to connect with students will inform their building principal who will, in turn, have a member of the administration or support team attempt to get in touch with you. If we don’t hear from you, you will hear from us - we want to make sure you are well and that you have what you need to continue your learning!

PreK-8 Learning

To ensure consistency throughout the district, curriculum directors will be working with curriculum leaders and teachers throughout the district to develop common learning experiences for families to access at home. That doesn’t mean that every learning opportunity will look exactly the same (remember that flexibility!), but you will see definite common threads and expectations throughout the work.

Before reaching out to your building administrators with clarifying questions about the academic learning plan, please be sure to read through this entire document and look for communication from your child’s teacher(s) during the week of April 6th. It’s possible that many of your questions will be answered at that time.

Malden High School Learning

All Malden High School students participate in our 1:1 technology program. Given the unique nature of the high school curriculum, most teachers and students at this level are quite comfortable with the Google platform and eager to engage in learning together. As stated above, we are following the Commissioner’s Guidelines by emphasizing deeper learning versus introduction of new concepts, and assessing work on a Pass/Fail (credit/no credit) basis.

April Vacation

We await further guidance from state and local officials and will be in touch as soon as we are able to provide specific details.

Grading for Third and Fourth Quarters

Third term for our students ends in early April. Tests or quizzes that occurred before March 13th that were not yet made up due to excused absences will not be marked as zeros. Teachers will be asked to record Pass/Fail (credit/no credit) for Third Quarter grades. All remote learning work that is completed will be recorded as Pass/Fail (credit/no credit). Fourth Quarter grades will be recorded as Pass/Fail (credit/no credit).

High School Seniors at Risk of Not Graduating

The Superintendent of Schools continues to be in contact with Commissioner Riley. As guidance is shared with superintendents, we will be in contact with staff and families.

Guidance for Families of Students with Special Needs

Families with special needs will be contacted by your student's liaison or classroom teacher. Additionally, any related services provider will be in touch to consult with you. Teachers will be working with you through their learning plan. They will assist you in becoming your child's learning coach. As parents you may reach out at any time to get advice and consultation. A team chair will be reaching out to you as support as well. While we may not have answers right away, we will work with you to support you.

For our parents who have students in schools outside the district, you should be in contact with our Out of District Coordinator and the school your student attends. All of our out of district schools have similar efforts to implement a learning plan for your student during this time.

Access to Technology for Families

We understand that some of our families have very limited access to technology. In an effort to assist families in this area, we worked to provide Chromebooks on a loaner basis to Malden Public Schools families who met the following criteria:

- * Families whose only access to technology is through a mobile phone
- * Families who do not have a working computer that is capable of accessing online learning resources

If you are a family with a high school student, it is expected that younger siblings would be able to use/share that device.

Meals for Students

Engaging in remote learning works up quite an appetite in our learners and we invite ALL Malden students to take advantage of our free breakfast and lunch programs. **Each day, Monday through Friday, from 10 a.m. - 1 p.m., families can pick up breakfast and lunch for their students at the following locations:**

**Salemwood School Parking Loop
Malden High School Prescott Street Lot (lot between CVS and MHS)**

- Meals are FREE to all Malden students.
- Families can drive up or walk up to each location.
- Students do not have to be present to receive the meals.
- Recipients will receive both breakfast and lunch meals at the same time so that you do not have to make multiple trips.
- Meals are available Monday through Friday.

RESOURCE LINKS

Malden Public Schools McKinney Vento Homeless Liaison: kmagras@maldenps.org

[City of Malden Department of Public Health](#)

[Online Resources for Families \(Enrichment activities\)](#)

Closing Thoughts

We recognize that the days ahead will pose new challenges that will surely test us. But we take great comfort in the fact that we are working through these challenging times **together**, and we see this shift to remote learning as an unexpected opportunity to try new approaches, unleash our creativity, form strong bonds with our Malden families, and find laughter and joy in this learning adventure. We look forward to taking this journey together with you in the coming days and weeks!