



# From the Desk of the Superintendent

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For timely updates and information.... Twitter: @MaldenPublic Website: [maldenps.org](http://maldenps.org)

## Coronavirus pandemic creates unprecedented challenges & responses for Malden district

By Steve Freker

*For the Malden Public Schools*

March came in like a lion... and left wearing a surgical facemask and a pair of latex gloves. In between, life as we know it changed dramatically— and perhaps irrevocably— for every single person of the 7.8 billion who populate our planet. The Coronavirus Pandemic of 2020 has forced the world to make dramatic, life-changing decisions that go right to the core of how we conduct our daily lives. It has affected how we socialize (or do not, due to physical distancing); how we work; and how we navigate basic tasks such as buying groceries or filling our gas tanks. The pandemic has also presented challenges as to how we educate our students, for the time being, both here in the Malden Public Schools and throughout the world.

**FREE BREAKFAST & LUNCH is AVAILABLE for ANY ANY STUDENT who is a MALDEN RESIDENT**

**@ Malden H.S. (Ferry St. lot, beside CVS) & Salemwood School from 10:00 a.m.-1:00 p.m., Monday-Friday ... Drive-Through pickup**

### SUPERINTENDENT'S MESSAGE

#### Greetings to all,

To say that the month of March, or just these past few weeks, have been eventful and disconcerting would be a major understatement. With the onset of the 2020 COVID-19 pandemic, we are all facing a phenomenon whose nature and scope has not been seen in our lifetimes. It has affected every part of lives and every member of our families in addition to our social and professional networks. The Coronavirus pandemic has also dramatically affected the Malden Public Schools and led us to face some unprecedented challenges. From the very start of this crisis, I have made it very clear that any and all responses to these challenges would be made with one priority: The safety and well-being of our students and their families. The hardest decision we



Superintendent Oteri

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# Supt. Oteri gives update on MPS response to the COVID-19 pandemic for the Malden School Committee

By Steve Freker  
*For the Malden Public Schools*

On the evening of March 11th, Supt. John Oteri announced that the Malden Public Schools would be closing “until further notice” due to the rapidly escalating Coronavirus/ COVID-19 pandemic. At that time, Malden was only one of six districts statewide choosing to close its buildings to students and staff due to health and safety reasons. That later changed when Governor Baker three

## HISTORIC ‘VIRTUAL’ MEETING is held —

History was made on Monday evening, April 6 when the first-ever “virtual” Malden School Committee meeting was held via the newly-popular ZOOM webinar application. School Committee members and Supt. Oteri all joined in for a virtual format that was televised “live” on Malden Access TV’s Youtube feed. Gov. Baker has approved virtual municipal meetings in place of physical meetings due to the COVID-19 pandemic *Steve Freker Photo/For the Malden*

When (the COVID-19 crisis) happened, there was no playbook. It was truly heartwarming to see the school community come together. Typically, in a crisis of this magnitude, the city or Emergency Management team have to lead the (response) effort in the schools. This was not the case in our School Dept., which identified and responded to key issues immediately. I thank the Supt. and his staff for all of their efforts.

— Mayor Gary Christenson

days later, ordering all schools statewide to be closed, initially, until April 6. He later extended the closure to May 4. On Monday, April 6, Supt. Oteri, by way of a first-in-history “virtual”

School Committee meeting, held via the ZOOM webinar, provided members a detailed, timeline-based report on the unprecedented challenges faced by the district due to the pandemic. The Superintendent outlined the decision to close the schools and the immediate steps taken to get a program for free meals (breakfast and lunch) distribution for students at two of Malden’s schools up-and-running less than 72 hours after the schools were closed. “Food insecurity is a real threat *See P.8*

# Malden Public Schools introduces new Remote Learning Plan to address all students in district

## Excerpts from a March 29 Letter from Supt. Oteri to Malden Families & Educators

Dear Malden Families and Educators,

Thank you so much for your support over the past two weeks in dealing with these unprecedented times. Our collective hearts at MPS go out to your families and everyone who is affected by COVID-19. We are also thankful for those who continue to work and serve our students during this time, especially our food service staff and custodians. The COVID-19 virus pandemic has drastically changed our daily lives and we at the Malden Public Schools have been adjusting to the new way of life as well.

On Wednesday, March 26, Governor Baker announced that schools in Massachusetts will be out of session until at least May 4. On Thursday, Commissioner Riley and the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) recommended a Remote Learning Model for school districts to employ for early April during the extended time out of school. This is a new recommendation which is different from the enrichment activities to engage students for the initial closure of schools. We will do our best to balance the needs of our school community including students, families and staff. Like you, our MPS staff members have real lives, real worries and their own families as well. Below is a list which highlights what to expect during this week and the coming remote learning plan:

- The safety and well-being of MPS students is our top priority. — Expect our staff to continue to reach out and connect with each family and assess the needs of our students.
- We will roll out the Remote Learning Plan on Monday, April 6. We received guidance from DESE on Thursday and Friday and will be using the coming week to develop a plan.
- Remote learning is not online learning. We do not expect students to be in front of a screen all day. In fact, DESE recommends about half of a school day.
- We will use Google Classroom and Google Meet to conduct some remote learning. In fact, as you know, many learning experiences that are happening in families during this time, do not take place online at all.
- While remote learning will look different from a traditional school day, we are looking to build opportunities for teachers to provide feedback to students; we anticipate that assignments during this time will receive a “credit/no credit” designation.

In the coming days, you can expect weekly updates from our office and from your schools. If there is one constant during this crisis it is that this situation changes rapidly. During this time of physical distancing, we want to ensure that the social and emotional connections to our school and community remain strong. Once again, thank you for your support during this time

Stay healthy, John Oteri, Superintendent



## MALDEN PUBLIC SCHOOLS REMOTE LEARNING PLAN

“We made sure our Remote Learning Program was thoughtful and that it reflected the needs our students and families... The safety and well-being of MPS students is our top priority. We must have a Remote Learning Program that is equitable and accessible. That was a watershed established from the beginning, and we stuck with it.” —*Superintendent John Oteri in remarks to the members of the Malden School Committee April 6*

**REMOTE LEARNING PLAN CONTEXT:** 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.



**‘Love is Love’ by Ly Nguyen of Ferryway School is State Winner**  
***Malden 6th grader honored by Massachusetts Partnerships for Youth coalition as Middle School winner in ‘RESPECTfully’ Poster Contest***

The Malden School Committee recognized Ferryway K-8 School 6th grader Ly Nguyen at its March meeting for her achievement of winning the statewide poster contest hosted by Massachusetts Partnerships for Youth (MPY) Massachusetts Partnerships for Youth, Inc. is a statewide non-profit organization that provides training, fosters collaboration, and develops programming to increase the health and safety of students. Members include Malden Public Schools and more than 140 public school districts, charter schools, private schools, special education schools, educational collaboratives, and youth community service organizations. MPY President Tony Pierantozzi, Nahant Public Schools Superintendent, was on hand along with some MPY staff members at the meeting. Also on hand were Ly’s family, as well as Ferryway School principal Abdel Sepulveda and others from the school. The theme for the 2019 - 2020 school year is "RESPECTfully." Healthy relationships are characterized by respect, honesty, and open communication. They make people feel good about themselves and each other. Ly’s poster, shown at right, was called, "Love is Love," and portrayed the theme of accepting people being themselves, whatever their orientation. This theme runs in common with the mission of the Malden Public Schools. Shown above, Ly Nguyen, center, to right of poster, is joined by her family members, Superintendent John Oteri, fourth from right, MPY President Tony Pierantozzi, second from left, and members of the Malden School Committee, including chairman, Mayor Gary Christenson, center, left of poster. —Steve Freker



# ***SUPERINTENDENT'S MESSAGE: The #1 priority of our response to the crisis has been the safety & well-being of our students and their families and that will not change***

## **Continued from Page One**

have had to make so far was indefinitely closing our school buildings to students and staff as of March 13 due to safety concerns surrounding COVID-19. This decision was made before Governor Baker's proclamation three days later which initially ordered schools closed statewide. Our decision also specifically stated "until further notice" and did not establish a reopening date, when we made our announcement on March 12. It came after much discussion with the Mayor's Office, and members of the Malden Emergency Management Team, which includes public safety officials from the police and fire departments and the Malden Board of Health.

At that time it was decided that it was impossible to speculate on a future date to possibly reopen schools, given the unpredictable nature of the pandemic and the lack of clarity as to its containment or other related health and safety issues that pertain to our students and their families. Governor Baker first ordered schools closed until April 27, then later extended the order until May 4. Our priority, as stated above, was the safety and social emotional well-being of our students.

Step One was to ensure the food security level that is in place for many of our students whose families rely on Malden Public Schools for breakfast and/or lunch every day when they come to school. Immediately, on Monday, March 16, we were up-and-running with a safe and efficient free meal distribution program outside two of our schools on either side of the city, at Malden High and the



Superintendent Oteri announced Malden schools were closed "until further notice" on March 12 due to safety concerns associated with the COVID 19 pandemic. Governor Baker issued a statewide school closing order three days later. **Steve Freker Photo/For the Malden Public Schools**

Salemwood School. Thanks to the fantastic and speedy work of our Business Manager Toni Mertz and Food Services Director Omar Hernandez and his staff, I am pleased to report that this has been one of several shining stars of success included in our district's response to the crisis. Nearly 500 Malden families are now being served daily through our weekday meal distribution program through the first several weeks of operation.

Our next move was to put into operation an Enrichment Learning Program that was accessible online for our students and their families and would promote enrichment and engagement for our students. Through some more superb "call to

action" response by Assistant Supts. Dr. Kelly Chase and Michael Wood, along with our directors, our robust enrichment program, translated into eight languages, was online on March 18 and it got immediate use and response by our students. Our staff also got involved and began to establish online connections with students. On March 25, Gov. Baker extended the closure to May 4 and we shifted to establishing a Remote Learning Plan, according to state guidelines. With the invaluable assistance of our Director of Instructional Technology Natalia Brennan, we worked with directors and administrators to develop a Remote Learning Plan which was designed specifically **Cont. Next Page**

## SUPERINTENDENT'S MESSAGE

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to address the needs of our Malden Public Schools students and families, particularly accessibility to online learning platforms. We had to get technology into the hands of families at home if they did not have this access. Through the efforts of many, including Ms. Brennan and staff volunteers, we successfully distributed over 750 loaner Chromebook to families who took advantage of a registration/signup effort after we communicated with them. Our Remote Learning Plan, which covers subject matter for all students, launched on April 6 and the early reviews have been very positive.

One constant in my numerous contacts with our administrators and staff is how much we all miss the students. The videos made by various schools with all their staff sending the best wishes of love and hope underscored this refrain. We truly cannot wait for our students to come back to school and a return of normalcy. All of our district's efforts to respond to the COVID-19 crisis have been fueled by an impressive and district-wide sense of commitment to working together in a selfless and courageous show of unity. It has been mirrored in many places throughout our nation and the world, but this is OUR response and it has been heartwarming to see how it has unfolded in this great time of need. I would like to personally thank each and every one of our staff and administration for working so hard and so well on behalf of our students and their families to make sure they can feel safer and more secure. I trust that this will continue and we will continue to rise to the occasion. Stay safe and be healthy!

—Superintendent John Oteri

**To our Parents and Staff: Please take advantage of updates and other information related to the COVID-19 crisis, detailed on Twitter (@MaldenPublic), and on our website (maldenps.org). Also, take advantage of these other valuable websites which offer access to many valuable resources both locally and nationwide: [www.cityofmalden.org](http://www.cityofmalden.org)**

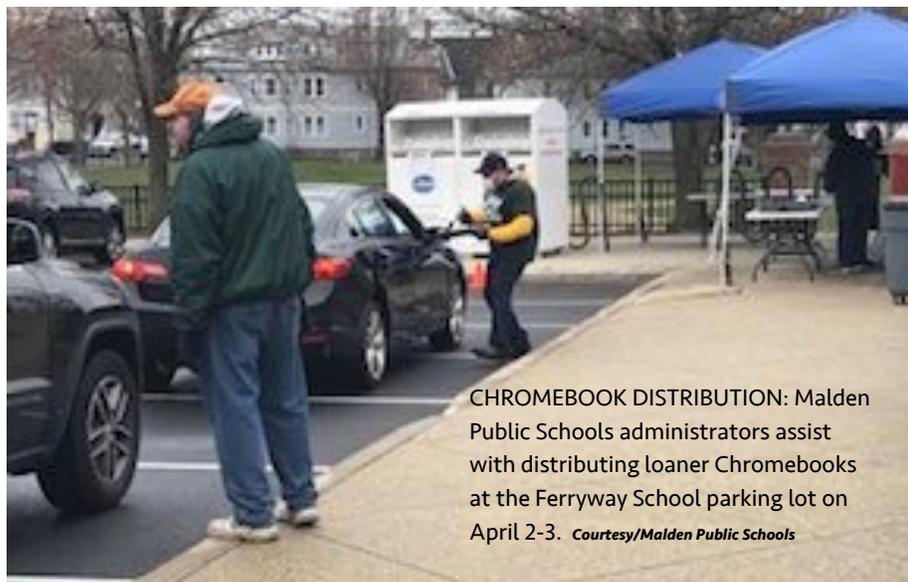
**[www.maldenneighbors.org](http://www.maldenneighbors.org)**

**[www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov) Twitter: @MassDPH**



## WOMEN'S HISTORY MONTH was CELEBRATED in MARCH

During the month of March, we recognized all of the amazing accomplishments of strong, determined women. Since 1987, the United States has formally recognized March as National Women's History Month. This year we will celebrate the 60th Anniversary of the ratification of the 19th Amendment to the United States Constitution, guaranteeing women the right to vote. This milestone required a lengthy and difficult struggle; victory took decades of agitation and protest.



CHROMEBOOK DISTRIBUTION: Malden Public Schools administrators assist with distributing loaner Chromebooks at the Ferryway School parking lot on April 2-3. *Courtesy/Malden Public Schools*

# The Malden Public Schools: 'Our Diversity is Our Strength'

The Malden school district is ranked #1 as the most culturally diverse by *niche.com* in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, with Malden High School rated the #1 most culturally diverse secondary education school overall. Throughout the district, all educators, administrators and students are unified in our stated mission to cherish and embrace our diversity, striving for excellence in the classroom and beyond.



One of the highlights of the month of March is always the Annual Junior Varieties show which is produced and presented as its biggest fundraiser by the Malden High Class of 2021. This years show ran on March 7-8 in the Jenkins Auditorium and was the 80th Junior Varieties, one of the longest-running continuous high school variety shows in the nation! *Steve Freker Photo/ For the Malden Public Schools*



The Salemwood School Fine Arts Club visited the Peabody-Essex Museum in March. During their visit they studied the work of the late artist, storyteller and educator Jacob Lawrence, known for his portrayal of African-American life. The students studied Lawrence as part of their mural dedicated to Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and discovered Lawrence art was dedicated to a concept started with the students of "moving forward". *Courtesy Photo*

# School Committee receives report of Malden Public Schools' response to COVID-19 crisis at first-in-history remote meeting on ZOOM web

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and we know that for some of our students, we are their source for breakfast and lunch.” Supt. Oteri reported that nearly 500 families are picking up free meals, safely, through a drive-through pickup facility set up at each school. He commended the food service employees, led by Director Omar Hernandez, who have distributing the means for the past three-plus weeks. “The dedicated, courageous and compassionate men and women of food service are truly some of the unsung heroes during this crisis.” he said.

The Superintendent also explained how the central administration staff, including assistant superintendents and program directors, quickly assembled the Malden Online Enrichment program, which was operational and accessible on March 18, just two days after the first day of school closings. “It is a very robust and comprehensive website with dozens of activities categorized by grade levels: PreK-2, 3-5, 6-8 and 9-12. Resources for EL students and Special Education were also provided,” Supt. Oteri said. When Governor Baker extended the school closings statewide to May 4, Education Commissioner Jeff Riley advised districts to shift to a Remote Learning Model. Supt. Oteri explained that the Malden Remote Learning Plan adhered strongly to the guidelines of Remote Learning that the commissioner set out and said he also consulted with several other districts. “We feel that the Remote Learning Plan, which is not meant to replace traditional learning in a brick and mortar school, is one that is flexible, supportive, offers outlets of creativity and



A safe, efficient drive-through pickup program with free breakfast and lunch for all Malden students features locations at Malden High School (shown above), Ferry St. lot next to CVS and the Salemwood School (529 Salem St.) parking loop. Pickup is available Monday through Friday, 10:00 a.m.-1:00 p.m. Supt. Oteri said this program set up on March 16, immediately after schools were closed.

*Steve Freker Photo/ For the Malden Public Schools*

innovation, going beyond the classroom and using, as Commissioner Riley says, the Natural World around oneself,” Superintendent Oteri told the School Committee. “We all concede that nothing will replicate the in-person and personalized learning which takes place. This plan is socially and emotionally supportive of meeting students' needs.” At the meeting, Mayor Gary Christenson, who serves as chairperson of the School Committee, stressed he was impressed and grateful that Supt. Oteri and his team waited until they had the appropriate Remote Learning Plan *See P.10*

## Malden Public Schools Mission Statement

Malden Public Schools is a place where students are encouraged to follow their dreams and become well rounded members of our community. The Malden Public Schools prepare students to be independent thinkers and enthusiastic learners who: Work hard; Respect others; Cherish our diversity; Seek challenges; Discover and Develop their individual talents; Strive for academic excellence; and look to Demonstrate personal and social responsibility. Malden Public Schools graduates are prepared to be active participants in our economy and democracy.

**IMPORTANT INFORMATION FOR MALDEN PUBLIC SCHOOLS FAMILIES with SNAP (Food Stamps) Benefits**  
**... COVID-19 Emergency Monthly Supplements now available**

**EMERGENCY SNAP SUPPLEMENTS  
FOR ALL SNAP BENEFICIARIES**

All SNAP beneficiaries who get less than the maximum benefit for their household size will automatically get a supplement up to the maximum benefit.

**1 PERSON HOUSEHOLDS WILL GET \$194**

**2 PERSON HOUSEHOLDS WILL GET \$355**

Example: John receives the minimum SNAP benefit of \$16 each month. With the COVID-19 emergency supplement John will automatically receive an additional supplement benefit of \$178/mo to bring his total benefit up to \$194

**IF YOU ALREADY RECEIVE SNAP BENEFITS YOU WILL GET  
THIS ADDED BENEFIT AUTOMATICALLY**

**IF YOU ARE ELIGIBLE FOR SNAP BUT NOT ENROLLED  
YOU CAN STILL APPLY.**

**CALL PROJECT BREAD FOR ASSISTANCE 1-800-645-8333**

***If Families are NOT on SNAP... they can apply NOW!***

**What if I do not get SNAP at the present time?**

If you are low-income we encourage you to apply. If you are approved, you may also qualify for an extra SNAP payment. To apply:

- The fastest way to apply is to apply online/on your smartphone at [DTAConnect.com](https://DTAConnect.com).
- Go to [Mass.gov/SNAP](https://Mass.gov/SNAP) to print a paper SNAP application and learn where to send it.
- Call the Project Bread FoodSource Hotline at 1-800-645-8333 to apply over the phone

**What if I need meals for my school age children?**

While schools are closed, The Malden Public Schools district is providing FREE pre-packaged breakfast and lunch school meals for children. FREE meals may be picked up at Drive-Through locations at Malden High School in the Ferry Street/CVS parking lot OR at Salemwood School parking lot loop from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. from Monday through Friday. Children who get SNAP or are approved for free or reduced-price meals will get additional EBT benefits, likely in April and/or May.

# Superintendent Oteri briefs School Committee on challenges faced & responses made to COVID-19

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for our Malden students before they launched the program. "Despite cities and towns diving right into a remote learning program and putting it right up online, I recall the moment when you told me 'We are not doing anything until every single student has an opportunity to learn,'" Mayor Christenson told the Superintendent Oteri after he had finished delivering his report. "You refused to rush into a program until it was appropriate and available to every student and every family and I will always remember this. "When (the COVID-19 crisis) happened, there was no playbook. It was truly heartwarming to see the school community come together," Mayor Christenson added. "Typically, in a crisis of this magnitude, the city or Emergency Management team have to lead the (response) effort in the schools. This was not the case in our School Dept., which identified and responded to key issues immediately. I thank the Supt. and his staff for all of their efforts."

"We wanted to make sure we had a program which is equitable and accessible," Supt Oteri responded. "I established this as a watershed and we stuck with it." Part of this overall approach was making sure that every family that requested it, would be able to take a loaner Chromebook from the Malden Public Schools so as to enable the student or students in their home to have access to schoolwork provided by their teachers online. Over 750 chromebooks were distributed over a three-day period, April 2, 3 and 6 at the Ferryway School. "I have to acknowledge our fantastic volunteers who made it a quick, efficient and safe effort. It was drive-through only and all the volunteers, which included principals of schools, other administrators and additional individuals, did a tremendous job for our families," the Superintendent said. Supt. Oteri noted a superb effort by MPS Director of Instructional Technology Natalia Brennan in all of the work setting up and distributing the loaner Chromebooks.

The Malden Public Schools Remote Learning Plan went into action April 6 and Supt. Oteri told the School Committee that his team would examine and reassess it in mid-April prepared to make adjustments or enhancements if necessary.

"I'd like to thank the Superintendent and all of your team for all you have done," said School Committee member Adam Weldai. "Just seeing some of the kids at the food sites and how happy they were to see someone they know handing out the lunches. Also, I have seen Chromebook distributions in other district and ours was so safe, quick and efficient." Weldai also praised Assistant Supt. Dr. Kelly Chase for her contributions to a "slow, thoughtful approach" that was right for Malden students.



**On Day One of the Chromebook Distribution program, Nalia Brennan, Malden Public Schools Director of Instructional Technology, left, and MPS Director of S.T.E.M., Dr. Doug Dias, center, were hard at work helping prepare for the three-day distribution. Over 750 Chromebooks were loaned to Malden Public Schools families to allow for accessibility to the district's new Remote Learning Plan, which went into effect April 6. Courtesy/ Malden Public Schools**

As to the Malden plan for remote learning, "When the schools were closed, there were some districts that came out right away, Boom! here's a website for remote learning," Weldai said. "There's a lot of angst and strife at home with parents not prepared to be a full-time teacher, and the mindset shared by Dr Chase and others resulted in a great product our kids can engage with moving forward." Supt. Oteri agreed, and added, regarding the Remote Learning Plan, "We made sure it was thoughtful and that it reflected the needs our students and families. I think Kelly (Chase) and her team did a remarkable job with it. "Going back to the Enrichment Program, we really felt it was robust as anyone's. On occasion I look at different districts' website and I do keep a little scorecard and I think Malden checks more boxes, when you consider the diversity and large number of students we have," Supt. Oteri said. He then referred to Malden Remote Learning, saying "Some smaller districts may have been a little more nimble and put programs up a bit sooner, but they don't have the challenges and scale we do. I think what we have is remarkable and we are very proud of it. I think it's a great foundation and if we are out longer, we have something to work with that will benefit all of our students."