

Westport Community Schools

Frequently Asked Questions

Updated: March 17, 2020

(all updates for today are highlighted in yellow)

Following Governor Baker's press conference yesterday calling for all schools in the Commonwealth to close for the next three weeks, The Westport Community Schools is enacting a closure of school from March 16 - April 7, 2020 and school-related activities.

The information detailed in this document is intended to provide guidance for this period. It is important to note that this is a fluid situation and so this document will be regularly updated and modified and it is recommended that you revisit frequently for the latest updates and information.

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Frequently Asked Questions

Student Learning

Q. Are the days during the three week closure counted as “school days?”

A. No. These are non-school days. These days will essentially be considered a three week school closing period (March 16 -April 7). There is no expectation of online learning or for the provision of educational services during this period. **There are, however,**

opportunities for students to reinforce their skills and continue to become proficient with information. Additionally, while there may not necessarily be assignments that are assigned and graded during this three week time period, students should consider the following:

- If you are taking an AP class, it will only benefit you to complete work assigned, turn it in over this time period, and have your teacher provide feedback. At this time, the AP exam has only been postponed for a short time and you want to make sure that you have done your best and practiced enough so that you can be most successful on this exam.
- Students that are in grades that uses the MCAS as a form of end-of-year summative assessment, it will be very important that you continue to practice your mathematical and English language arts skills. As with the AP testing, you want to make sure that you have continued to practice so that you can perform your best on this assessment.
- While assignments can not be expected to be turned in and graded during the time period of the closure, it is not unreasonable for a teacher to provide an assignment that will be graded upon return to school. While it may not necessarily be due the first day back from school, it could be graded at some point. While out of school, it would be smart to use this time to complete these types of assignments so that you are not feeling overwhelmed with work with you return to school. Remember, this is not a vacation for students or staff. We want our students to be the best that they can be and continued practice and reinforcement of skills will help to prevent any substantial regression during this time period.

It is important to note that the school year will not extend beyond the 185th day (June 23, 2020)

Q. Are there expectations around Distance and Online Learning Expectations for Students or Teachers?

A. These are non-school days and so there is only an expectation of continuation of learning. This would be similar to completing enrichment activities, homework packets, assignments through Google Classroom, hands-on at home projects, and other online practice (ie, ST Math, Lexia), etc.

Students should not be completing assignments that are due to be graded and teachers should not be assigning new work or expecting students to submit work to be graded. Credit recovery exceptions for those seniors making up for prior failed courses will be addressed on a case by case basis. School Counselor and Administration will contact those students directly. Any junior, sophomores, and freshmen that need credit recovery will be addressed and adjusted once classes resume. Our goal is to make sure all seniors will be able to graduate this year and all students have the opportunity to make up missed credit.

All teachers and providers will be contacting their students to ensure a “continuation of learning” as described above. Teachers should communicate, insofar as they are able, at least once with their classes, providing what they have determined to be the best pathway towards a continuation of learning. Teachers should communicate as close to the beginning of each week as possible and check in at the end of each week... via email, through their online platform (ie. Google Classroom, Clas Dojo, Class Tag, etc),

	<p>where applicable or by phone.</p> <p>Any teacher who needs assistance in effectively communicating with all of their classes efficiently should contact Anthony Tomah (atomah@westportschools.org), Darren Elwell (delwell@westportschools.org) or their building administration..</p> <p>These experiences are not mandatory and are not considered instruction. For all students K-12, there will be assignments or additional learning provided by the district and teachers. This is being done in the interest of ensuring a continuation of learning to remain in line with our district core values. Additionally, we are providing digital and remote learning opportunities during this closure intended to keep students connected to learning and skill reinforcement, based on guidance from the MA Commissioner of Education.</p>
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Q.	What resources are available for teachers, parents, and students to enrich learning during this period of closure?
A.	<p>We are continuing to compile resources and links for all students and will share that information here. Please be sure to check here frequently, as information will be updated regularly. These resources and links are deemed suitable no matter the nature or pathway their teacher has provided/will provide.</p> <p>Internet Services: Reduced Cost Internet Services</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Charter Communications ○ Free W-Fi Hotspots Provided By Comcast <p>There are a number of education companies that are offering free subscriptions due to school closings. This list continues to grow daily. We are thankful to all of these vendors for recognizing this national need and for supporting students throughout the country. You can check out these resources at: http://www.amazingeducationalresources.com/</p> <p>Additionally, students in grades 3-10 may wish to access online materials through the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education’s MCAS site. This site offers families an opportunity to check out released test questions and practice tests from past MCAS administrations. They provide multiple formats for students to view the questions and practice. While the status of the MCAS testing for this year is still an area that we need further clarification from the state, students in those grades are encouraged</p>

	<p>to check out this site, as it will give them an opportunity to practice skills and concepts that are directly connected to the grade-level standards. Families can check out this resource at: http://www.doe.mass.edu/mcas/testitems.html</p> <p>Some of our students at the Macomber Elementary and the Westport Elementary have been developing mathematical fluency and conceptual understanding through the use of ST Math. Additionally, they have been building their basic reading skills through the Lexia program Both if these tools are available through the internet and students are able to log on at home to utilize these resources. Information will be sent home shortly to assist families with logon information for these sites.</p> <p>For the educational resources section https://www.squigglepark.com/squigglepark/ games for pre-k through grade 3</p> <p>https://kids.nationalgeographic.com/ games and articles</p> <p>.</p> <p>PBS Media/WGBH Education mass.pbslearningmedia.org</p> <p>Additional Resources Shared - The Natick Public Schools Have compiled this great information:</p> <p style="text-align: center;">K-4 Enrichment Resources 5-8 Enrichment Resources</p> <p>For additional assistance, please contact one of the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dr. Gary Reese Superintendent greese@westportschools.org • Mr. Darren Elwell Curric Director delwell@westportschools.org • Mr. Tony Tomah Tech Director ttomah@westportschools.org
Q.	Given a three week closure, what happens with the MCAS test for students?
A.	At this time we will not be in school during the previously scheduled MCAS window. We expect to hear more from DESE in the near future on this topic as a great many schools are in the same position. Based on the March 16th meeting with DESE Commissioner Jeff Riley, the Grade 10 ELA MCAS will be postponed (new dates have not yet been determined). Since the grade 3-8 testing window begins in March, the state will be adjusting the testing window (new dates have not yet been determined).
Q.	What is going to happen in regards to graduation?
A.	As this situation is ever changing we will have to wait until April 7th to make decisions based on the directions provided by the state at that time. DESE has recommended that graduation dates be pushed out to the end of June. We have not made any adjustment yet, but will communicate out to families soon regarding any potential changes.
Q.	What are my responsibilities as a special education teacher/related service provider, for the students on my caseload during this three week closure?

A.	<p>The expectation that has been communicated by the Department of Education, is that you are checking in with families during this school closure. This can be done through phone calls and email correspondence. You should use your professional judgment and your knowledge of your students to determine the frequency for which these check ins should occur. For some students, once per week might be appropriate, and for other students, checking in more frequently might be warranted. If you feel as though you need guidance on this, please consult with Elaine Santos, Director of Special Education at estantos@westportschools.org</p> <p>The goal is that this communication can help to minimize the disruption for these students to the extent possible. You can also use this time during the closure to complete paperwork, IEP writing, meeting invitations, etc, so that these are all set to be sent out upon re-opening of the district.</p>
Q.	<p>I am a related service provider to students on an IEP. What are my responsibilities during this three week closure?</p>
A.	<p>The expectation is that you provide suggested activities that can be done at home for your students, and share this with them through checking in with families. This can be done either by phone or through email.</p>
Q.	<p>I am a Team-chairperson, what are my responsibilities during this school closure?</p>
A.	<p><i>The expectation is that you use this time to complete paperwork, writing of IEP's, meeting invitations, N1's etc, so that these are all set to be sent out upon re-opening of the district. If you have questions, as always, please consult with your appropriate Elementary and/or Secondary Coordinators, for additional guidance.</i></p>
Q.	<p>I am a contractor who provides related services to students on an IEP. What are my responsibilities during this closure?</p>
A.	<p><i>The expectation is that you provide suggested activities that can be done at home for your students, and share this with them through checking in with families. This can be done either by phone or through email.</i></p>
Q.	<p>What if I am scheduled to take the SAT and the school/testing center is closed?</p>
A.	<p><i>The College Board has posted information on their website about changes in the SAT testing process.</i></p>
Q.	<p>What about the term three marking period for the WJSHS.</p>
A.	<p>Term 3 grades will now close on Friday, April 17, 2020.</p>
Q.	<p>Has the schedule for AP testing changed?</p>
A.	<p><i>Information about possible changes to the schedule of the AP exams can be found</i></p>

at the college board website.

Frequently Asked Questions Special Education

Frequently Asked Questions Special Education	
Q.	My child is on an IEP or 504 Plan, and I am concerned about the implications of the closure on my child’s educational progress.
A.	Upon the conclusion of the closure, and the re-opening of the district, IEP teams will be available to convene to determine what type of impact the closure had on your child’s educational progress, and make individualized team based decisions as needed.
Q.	My child is on an IEP and receives “services only” (i.e. speech/Language counseling etc.). Will my child receive these services during the closure?
A.	Services will not be provided during the closure, consistent with how this is handled on snow days.
Q.	Will my child’s special education liaison, related service provider, and Director of Special Education be available if I have a question during this three week closure?
A.	Yes, special education teachers, related services providers, and the Director of Special Education will be available to assist with specific questions as needed. You can expect a “check in” from your child’s liaison, in the form of a phone call or email during this time as well.
Q.	I have made a request for an Initial Evaluation on or after March 15th. What should I expect?
A.	Any timelines associated with an initial evaluation request received on March 15th or during the two week closure, will be processed using day one of the timeline as the date the district re-opens. For example, if the district re-opens on April 7th, that would count as day one associated with the timeline for an initial evaluation request.
Q.	My child takes medication at school and I need to get the medication to give to my child during this school closure period. How can I pick it up?
A.	If your child takes a medication in school and you need to obtain the medication from the school in order for your child to continue to take it during the three week school closure, please contact me at greese@westportschools.org by Tuesday, March 17th at 4:00 pm. We will make arrangements for you to pick up the medication through our school nurses/nurse leaders at some point on Thursday, March 19, 2020. In the email, please include your name, your child’s name/grade-level, and the school that your child attends. One of our nurses will contact you to arrange for the pickup of medication.
Q.	I am looking for general tips on how to support my child during this three week

	closure.
A.	Please see the following resources for general tips that have been shared with us by Lunenburg Public Schools.
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Frequently Asked Questions Activities, Events, and Athletics

<h2 style="margin: 0;">Frequently Asked Questions Activities, Events, and Athletics</h2>	
Q.	Are there any athletic, club, or activity events happening during this period of closure?
A.	No. All school-related events are canceled during this period.
Q.	Are Spring Sports delayed?
A.	Yes. After much discussion, the <u>MIAA BOD</u> decided to delay the start of the 2020 spring season (tryouts) to April 27, 2020. Spring sports registration paperwork is available on our website and for pickup in the main office once school resumes. Paperwork must be handed in by <u>APRil 17th</u> .
Q.	My child attends the prek program and/or extended day and I have paid already for this time period when school is closed. What happens to my money?
A.	For those families that have children in our prekindergarten or extended day programs who have pre-paid for the time period of school closure, we will make appropriate adjustments to your account and credit your account for payments due in the future. We will make these adjustments after this three week period and communicate out to families regarding account balances.
Q.	What happens to public meetings (such as the school committee meeting scheduled for March 19th).
A.	Per the directive from the town, all public meetings, all upcoming town meetings will be held remotely. There is a school committee scheduled for Thursday evening. We will provide information later this week for individuals to be able to access the meeting and participate remotely, including those individuals that may wish to participate in the meeting through public comment.
Q.	Preschool/Kindergarten registration was scheduled for April 15-17th. Will that still be happening?
A.	A letter with detailed information about Preschool/PreK registration will be mailed when school reopens, April 7th. Registration is scheduled to take place April 15-17. If for any reason, we need to adjust those dates, we will notify families.
Q.	How will the delays and cancellations impact stipends and payments for coaches and advisors?
A.	For activities and athletic events/seasons we will need to revisit what and how those earning stipends will be paid. More information will be forthcoming following further

discussions.

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Frequently Asked Questions

General Questions

Frequently Asked Questions	
Q.	How will the days of a three week closure count against school days?
A.	The Westport Community Schools will be in school through June 23, 2020 which is our regularly scheduled 185th day (while students only attend school for 180 days, the state requires us to provide a schedule that shows 185 days, to build in for the possibility of school closures. DESE has indicated that no school will need to attend classes beyond what they had previously scheduled as their 185th day)..
Q.	Currently the schools are closed through April 7, 2020. Will this be extended? How will we be notified?
A.	The Westport Community Schools will continue to monitor this fluid situation and will make the best determinations in the best interest of the students and staff. Information will continue to be provided on our website, through email, and on all major news outlets.
Q.	What will happen to April vacation (April 20-24)?
A.	At this time the April vacation week is scheduled as planned. However, given these unexpected school closures we may explore the need for additional school days and this will be revisited in the near future with all impacted employees. This may be a local determination or could eventually be a statewide directive from DESE. We will continue to monitor the situation and communicate updates to staff and families as these decisions are made.
Q.	Will there be access to any school buildings during the March 16 - April 7, 2020 closure?
A.	At this time all buildings are closed and only essential personnel will have access. We are aware of building access requests and we will be communicating accommodations for reasonable requests in the near future. Limited access will enable our custodial staff to complete a more thorough cleaning of the buildings in preparation for the re-opening of schools. On Wednesday at a specific time period, staff will be provided with an opportunity to enter the building to obtain any materials, teaching resources, etc. Access during the second and third week will be scheduled and communicated out to staff. Students, parents and community members do not have access to the building during this school closure period.
Q.	Will food services be available for students that qualify for free and reduced lunch?
A.	We are currently discussing how we might be able to support students and their families with any food needs. We will be offering any child that resides in Westport who is under

the age of 18, a free bagged breakfast and bagged lunch daily, beginning March 23rd. This will be a grab and go drive-up food delivery that will occur for all students at the Westport Junior Senior High School. Watch for more information to follow regarding the logistics. If you have any concerns about transportation/getting to the high school daily, please contact Michelle Rapoza at mrapoza@westportschools.org and we will assist in making arrangements for your child. **No Westport child will go without breakfast and lunch during this time period!**

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Frequently Asked Questions

COVID-19 Resources and Support

Q.	Should everyone be practicing social distancing?
A.	Yes. "Now, we ask that you do your part. Creating social gatherings during the school outage will minimize the impact of closing school. Carefully consider the necessity of being together. This is not a vacation. It is an extreme measure to allow for social distancing so the virus is not spread. Not being exposed to the virus is the best way not to get sick. Please refer to this CDC webpage for other recommendations to prevent illness: https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/about/prevention.html "
Q.	What about using school or other playgrounds? What about playdates?
A.	Articles suggest avoiding playdates and follow best practices without alarming children.
Q.	Are there any resources or social stories for children?
A.	The Autism Educator shared this social story available for download.
Q.	What resources are available for me to engage my child in conversations about COVID-19?
A.	<p>Resources from the Commonwealth of Massachusetts</p> <p>https://www.mass.gov/guides/information-on-the-outbreak-of-2019-novel-coronavirus-covid-19</p> <p>https://docs.google.com/document/d/1ghmiMZH_eOQlF5BwpEWBQgQM_S0FF4I7E2V_AQNPx8/edit</p> <p>Resources from the United States Center for Disease Control and Prevention</p> <p>https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html</p> <p>https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/faq.html</p> <p>https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/summary.html</p> <p>How to Talk to Children about the Coronavirus</p> <p>https://www.health.harvard.edu/blog/how-to-talk-to-children-about-the-coronavirus-2020030719111</p> <p>Talking to Teen/Tweens about Coronavirus</p> <p>https://www.nytimes.com/2020/03/02/well/family/coronavirus-teenagers-anxiety.html</p>

Q.	I am feeling stress and anxiety. What resources are available to me during this stressful time?						
A.	<p>Managing stress and confusion about COVID-19 is a very common and acceptable feeling. As stated previously, this is uncharted territory for all of us. It is critical that we talk with our children about the coronavirus. Listed below are some resources you can use to help guide that conversation. Equally important is taking care of ourselves as the adults. I equate it to the directions that we can all probably recite when flight attendants are giving safety precautions on a plane. For those less familiar, before a plane takes off, the flight attendants will go through a series of safety precautions to help passengers know what to do in case of an unexpected emergency. Part of their instructions includes something like...</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>“If there is a loss of cabin pressure, the panels above your seat will open, and oxygen masks will drop down. If this happens, place the mask over your nose and mouth, and adjust as necessary. Be sure to adjust your own mase before helping others.”</i></p> <p>Most of us have the inclination to take care of others before ourselves. This is a wonderful trait to have and something we should all aspire to... giving selflessly. However, unless we also consider self care, we will not be as effective in helping our children, our families, and others in need. Below is a resource that adults can use to help manage stress and anxiety during this time.</p> <p><i>Managing Stress and Anxiety on the CDC website</i> https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prepare/managing-stress-anxiety.html</p> <p><i>MIIA Resource for Westport Community Schools Staff Members</i> The Employee Assistance Program (MIIA) 1-800-451-1834 Available to staff and household members 24 hours per day, 7 days per week. <i>Confidential Counselors</i></p>						
Q.	How do I contact the Westport Board of Health?						
A.	<table border="0"> <tr> <td><i>Matthew Armendo</i></td> <td><i>Director of Public Health</i></td> <td><i>508-636-1015</i></td> </tr> <tr> <td><i>Linda Pierce</i></td> <td><i>Public Health Nurse</i></td> <td><i>508-636-1030</i></td> </tr> </table>	<i>Matthew Armendo</i>	<i>Director of Public Health</i>	<i>508-636-1015</i>	<i>Linda Pierce</i>	<i>Public Health Nurse</i>	<i>508-636-1030</i>
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Q.	Where should I go for the most current and accurate updates regarding COVID-19?						
A.	One of the best resources for Massachusetts residents is the Massachusetts Department of Public Health website. It is consistently updated with the latest information here .						
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Frequently Asked Questions Employment/Human Resources

Q.	Will teachers, staff, faculty be compensated during the three week closing period?
A.	All active teachers, staff, and faculty members will be compensated their regular bi-weekly or weekly pay during the school closure period. Hourly employees will be compensated based on their standard weekly schedule and the hourly rates as if school was operating normally. How this may impact your accrued time (sick, personal, vacation, etc.) may need to be discussed at a later date with Union Leadership. With the Governor's extension through April 7, 2020 this additional time will need to be considered.
Q.	How will this impact hourly/contractual employees?
A.	There may be some nuances to hourly/contractual employees. Your direct supervisor will be in touch by the end of the day on March 17th to communicate more information about expectations during the school closure period.
Q.	How will you employees receive their paystubs?
A.	Paystubs for the March 27th payroll will be held in a locked cabinet in central office by the payroll administrator. The paystubs will be sent to the buildings for normal distribution when school reopens on April 7th. If any employee needs the paystub prior to that time, please contact the business office and individual arrangements can be made. This distribution procedure will be re-evaluated should there be any adjustments to the school re-opening on April 7th.
Q.	Will staff members on an approved leave of absence during the three week closure period be credited back any accrued time off (sick, personal) etc.?
A.	Based on the forced closure by Governor Baker that given these days will be classified as non-work days, for those staff members on an approved FMLA, those days will not count towards any accrued time during their leave.
Q.	Is there any expectation for Administrators/Central Office personnel (only exception those designated as essential personnel:custodians, cafeteria staff, facilities director, superintendent) to report to work if needed during the three week closing period?
A.	Based on the forced closure by Governor Baker that administration/central office personnel (except those designated as essential personnel) will not be expected to report to work during the initial closure but this decision will be reassessed as we get closer to the April 7, 2020 date. A rotating schedule has been established for the central office so that there is an individual in the building daily to respond to phone calls. The office is not

	<p>open for visitors. If technical complications arise from completing payroll/accounts payable functions remotely then a staggered shift of essential Business Officer personnel to complete tasks will be coordinated. The Business Manager will be in touch with Business Office personnel during the school closing period. All Business/Central Office staff members are asked to remain as vigilant as possible in monitoring email communications and tasks remotely during this closure period. The closure period is not considered a vacation.</p>
Q.	What are the obligations for staff during the closure?
A.	<p>Staff are expected to remain as vigilant with their duties and responsibilities to the extent possible with monitoring email communications and essential duties remotely while remaining safe. The closure period is not considered a vacation period.</p> <p>Teachers may continue to grade papers, assessments, look at data, prepare future lessons, etc. Teachers should be aware of the teaching and learning expectations described above.</p>
Q.	During the closure will Custodial Staff be expected to work to clean and disinfect touch point areas?
A.	<p>Yes. Custodial staff will be expected to continue to deep clean the school thoroughly during the closure period. We may reduce time worked each day or week. This will be determined in conjunction with the school committee and will be communicated out to custodial/maintenance staff through Kim OUellette and/or Mike Duarte.</p> <p>Additional staff will report to work on a specified day during the closure to clean and disinfect all technology and kitchen equipment. The directors of each of those departments will be in touch with the appropriate staff to coordinate this schedule.</p>
Q.	Will staff receive guidance on cleaning their personally issued Laptop/Device prior to returning to school?
A.	Yes. The Director of Technology will provide specific feedback and advice for various tools and technology.
Q.	Am I able to protect my privacy if making a phone call to a parent/family from a personal line?
A.	<p>Verizon, At&T, and Comcast do the following...</p> <p>To block your number from being displayed temporarily for a specific call:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Enter *67. 2. Enter the number you wish to call (including area code). 3. Tap Call. The words "Private," "Anonymous," or some other indicator will appear on the recipient's phone instead of your mobile number.
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