

Whitefish Bay School District K-12 Update- March 16, 2020
Family Frequently Asked Questions

Our first priority on Friday, March 13, 2020 was the safety of our students and staff. Our wish was not to panic students, staff or families, but to communicate only the most vital information. Our District's decision to not immediately communicate potential longer-term solutions, in particular Virtual Learning Time (VLT), was in response to the uncertainty and rapid changes that are surrounding this situation. It was not our intent to communicate that we were not working on a more immediate solution for continuity of learning.

Now that those initial decisions are made and we are getting more information from other instructional partners, continuity of learning is our next priority. As we communicated, we are not prepared at this time to offer Virtual Learning Time (VLT). We are preparing, however, for the possibility of launching virtual learning for a portion of the four week closure, or in preparation for a more extended closure.

Although VLT is a viable long-term option, we also know that not all courses or classes can be taught best in this manner, especially if staff are also working remotely. As a District, our reputation and academic success is because of face-to-face instruction from our high quality staff. Our hope is that we can return to our regular instructional routines this school year, and that we will not have to use VLT unless necessary.

Providing virtual learning will entail some training of both staff and students, and will involve bumps along the way. In the interim, we have made digital learning resources available to keep the focus of learning at home, along with providing some guidelines for how much time to spend. These are familiar digital learning tools to our students, and we've organized the list by grade level and content area.

We recognize a long term school shutdown places a significant burden on our families, staff and community. The Whitefish Bay School District has created a [website](#) to provide the latest updates related to COVID-19 impact to our WFB schools. Feel free to visit for the most recent updates and communication to both families and staff.

Many of you in the community have been reaching out with questions regarding the District's next steps. Please see the Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) and responses below.

What can families do to engage their student(s) for these four weeks?

In the short-term, the District has organized some Digital Learning resources (DL) to help keep the focus on learning at home. These DL activities will not count for instructional minutes, nor be graded or required by teachers at this time.

- [Please click here for the list of DL resources](#) by level.

Are the digital resources being offered for free to parents and districts safe?

We know that many products are coming on the market and are being offered for “free.” The digital resource list we are suggesting are tools that we currently use in our schools, that meet the Federal data and privacy laws for children, and our students are familiar with. We caution our families not to subscribe to other vendors at this time, as many of them have not gone through our rigorous data and security screening.

Will my child(ren) need immediate access to their textbooks and school supplies?

We are preparing for an extended closure, hoping we will be back on April 13, 2020. We don’t believe that there are any critical instructional items that will be needed. If you have any specific critical items still in the school, please contact the main office of your child’s school or the recreation department.

What if my child(ren) does not have access to a device at home?

If your child does not have a technology device at home, that is available during the school day, we will check out a chromebook for home use for the duration of school closure. Since we are NOT a one-to-one district, we have limited quantity.

We need to prioritize devices for students that do not have one available at home first. If you have access to a computer or device at home during the school day, we ask that you do not request one. If you requested a device, WFB families should plan to come to:

Whitefish Bay High School in the rotunda

Wednesday, March 18, 2020 from 6:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m.

To request a device, [please click here to fill out the technology device form](#) by **5:00 a.m. on March 18, 2020.** This is the only option for device pick up at this time.

What if my child (grades 3-12) has forgotten their google password or does not have log-in information?

If you do not have the log-in information required to access some of the tools on our DL list, it is located in Skyward. The Google student password can be found on family access under the "report cards and letters" button on the left side of the screen. This letter will be titled "Google login and password information or [click here to fill out a login and password request form](#). Our District Technology department will respond to your request.

What if I do not have home internet access?

If you do not have internet at home, Charter Communications (Spectrum) is offering free internet for 60 days. The offer begins Monday, March 16, 2020. Those interested in enrolling are asked to call 1-844-488-8395.

What happens if the closure goes beyond the initial four weeks?

Continuity of learning for an extended period of time is our priority. The DPI states, "For virtual learning to be successful you must have a plan in place that supports the learning culture already prevalent in your district and as an instructional program aligned to the school district standards."

For some surrounding districts there is already a one-on-one device initiative and learning management system culture in place. They use it regularly in their instructional design, planning their curriculum standards, and implementation. Their students, staff, and families have been trained and supported in this type of learning design and is utilized on a regular basis. Switching to full time VLT is easier for them, as they have been doing it on a regular basis.

Based on our current understanding of COVID-19 and CDC recommendations, **we are preparing for an extended time off from school, and the implementation of VLT.** DPI states, "In planning for virtual instruction, several factors must be considered, including how to accommodate students without internet access or compatible devices, how to serve special education students and English Learners, and how students account for learning in a virtual environment, to name a few." VLT is much bigger than just posting assignments on google classroom or simply sending assignments. As stated earlier, our curriculum and standards are not written to be implemented in this design. We will greatly need our families' support and patience if we have an extended closure and need to launch into a VLT environment.

What's the timeline for WFB starting a Virtual Learning Environment?

We are working to initiate a VLT in real time. This is an extremely complex process that requires thoughtful planning and preparation for both students and staff. We would be looking to launch

VLT if we exceed our current four week closure. VLT would begin to count for instructional minutes, and require a day to day schedule for both students and staff. If we are able to provide staff and student training, we may be offering VLT sometime after our spring break. Our intention is to have some “trial dates” in those two weeks after spring break, so if we have extended time off, we have worked out some kinks before we are live for consecutive days. We will update our families with a more specific timeline when we have that available.

Are Students with Disabilities under IDEA served during VLT?

Yes. DPI states, “If a school provides services through virtual learning, the school must ensure students with disabilities have equal access to the same opportunities, and that to the greatest extent possible, special education and related services are provided.” Our District is working on how to best meet the needs of all students, in a VLT environment, ensuring the safety and health of students, support staff and teachers.

Are Students with Disabilities under Section 504 served during VLT?

Yes. Our District is working on how to best meet the needs of all students, in a VLT environment, ensuring the safety and health of students, support staff and teachers.

Why is the Whitefish Bay School District not immediately offering VLT?

The Whitefish Bay School District does not utilize a prevalent blended or on-line instructional delivery model, and not all of our courses and curriculum align or have been written for VLT. Our curriculum is written for a face to face instructional design, thus we do not have the ability to immediately respond to a VLT form of instruction.

VLT has not been prioritized in our District based on our community’s participation in our development of our [Focus Plan](#) and our [three-year technology plan](#). Our community established a Transformational Educational Practices (TEP) committee in 2015 whose charge was to further articulate the Focus Plan’s goal of “transformational educational practices.”

The TEP Committee finalized its report in 2016, specifically recommended to emphasize the implementation of our District’s Seven Thriving Dispositions, and not focusing on one-to-one technology devices and virtual environments, as part of our “transformative” practices. Our focus has been on implementing the TEP Committee recommendations. We know that the thriving dispositions, our high quality instructional staff, and our rigorous curriculum is the key to our academic success as a District.

What are we doing to keep our students, staff, and community safe?

Our District's response last week was focused on keeping staff, students, and families safe by beginning to practice social distancing. We will continue to practice social distancing in our decisions moving forward. We are following cleaning and disinfecting best practice recommendations from the CDC, for prevention of COVID-19, at all of our sites.

Are all District facilities closed?

In order to practice CDC recommended social distancing, and to help slow the spread of COVID-19, District buildings and grounds will be closed to students and families except at times communicated by the District. This includes access to gyms, playgrounds, and outdoor fields.

Will school grounds/playgrounds be open?

Our playgrounds are closed at this time, as equipment is not regularly cleaned. We will continue to monitor and follow the recommendations and guidance from the CDC, Department of Health Services, and local public health officials.

What about Spring Break?

Spring break will continue as planned from March 23-27. While away from school, we encourage you to follow the guidance and recommendations provided by the CDC regarding [safe hygiene](#) and [travel](#). Students and staff who travel to any Level 2 or Level 3 country, or any areas in the United States with a significant outbreak, may be asked to self-quarantine for 14 days before returning to school or work.

Are all athletics and club sports canceled?

The Governor's order requires all K-12 school buildings to be closed for extracurricular activities. If your child is involved in athletics or extracurriculars that regularly take place in a non-school building, you should contact the provider organization regarding cancellations and follow CDC guidance regarding social distancing.

What are the expectations of teachers during the four week closure?

- Be safe and healthy
- We are asking in the short-term (this week and the week of break) that teachers communicate **only** our [District's digital learning resources](#) for learning opportunities.
- It is important to understand we are in a shutdown. To that end, it is essential that teachers respond only to emails they deem urgent. As we are anticipating a mass amount of communication in the near future.

- Teachers will be receiving training and begin planning for implementing a VLT, starting no later than March 30, 2020.

Will student graduation be affected?

The District has made the decision to be closed until April 13, 2020; however, the current public health emergency is a rapidly evolving situation, and DPI will be reassessing their recommendations and requirements for schools on an ongoing basis in order to protect the health of students, educators, staff, and the public. As of today, March 16th, DPI has waived the minute requirements. More information will be shared when it becomes available.

What conversations should parents have with their children at home?

The DPI recommends the following resource: [Talking to Children about COVID-19 \(Coronavirus\) - A Parent Resource.](#)

How does this impact instructional minutes and days of instruction?

The School District of Whitefish Bay has developed a District calendar that has prioritized additional instructional minutes for inclement weather and short-term closures. We were one of the only school districts last school year that did not have to make up instructional time due to the polar vortex.

The Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction (DPI) March 16 communication to Districts stated, “*The Department of Public Instruction (DPI) will waive the hour requirement for any school district that requests the DPI to do so due to this ongoing public health emergency. As you and your community navigate the decisions ahead and look at what continuity of learning you can provide in this unprecedented situation, the department wants to ensure the agency is eliminating barriers in your ability to do this. Accordingly, we are asking the governor to suspend a portion of the Administrative Code, so we may provide an expedited process and simple form for you to use to request a waiver and have it granted immediately.*” Whitefish Bay will continue to work with DPI and request the needed waivers, if necessary, as additional information comes available. More information will be shared when it becomes available.

What about our Advanced Placement Courses and Upcoming Assessment?

Our District is committed to preparing our students to be successful for their AP Exams. Based on information from AP sent on March 13, 2020, we will be making our District’s decision around the testing schedule based on the extent of our closure. At a minimum, we will be requesting the late testing schedule for the third week of May. Below is the most updated information:

Updated March 13, 2020 retrieved from AP Website

Current school and district plans indicate that many schools will remain in session and administer AP Exams in May. We understand that this situation is evolving daily, however. If a school is already closed or needs to close in March or April, AP makeup testing dates will be available. Which dates best serve a school will depend on how much instructional time is lost:

- *If a school is able to make up most of the lost instruction time, we recommend testing on the regularly scheduled exam dates.*
- *If a school needs to make up some instructional time, they may update students' exam orders to late testing scheduled for the third week of May. Selecting "school closing: election, national holiday, or natural disaster" ensures that the late-testing fee will not be applied.*
- *Testing in the fourth week of May is possible, if needed, but must be requested through AP Services for Educators.*
- *Schools closed for extended periods of time that need even later options (i.e., June retest dates) can contact AP Services for Educators beginning in April to make such arrangements.*

What are the implications for state testing/assessments?

It is increasingly clear that it will not be possible to complete testing this year due to the pandemic. The DPI will aggressively pursue a waiver request to the United States Department of Education (USDE) from this requirement and will work with the legislature and governor's office around suspending the state test requirements this spring.

In closing, the staff will be communicating during this time away from school for professional learning so we can prepare virtual learning opportunities for families in case of an extended closure. We will be in regular communication via email, school messenger, and our website as information changes. Thank you for your patience and understanding. These are unprecedented times. We will continue to update you as we move forward.

The School District of Whitefish Bay is working closely with federal, state, and local leaders to provide information to our system to ensure the health and safety of their students and educators in creating this ever evolving guiding document. The School District of Whitefish Bay shall be held harmless from and against any and all suits, actions, damages, claims, costs, losses or liability of whatsoever kind or character arising from the use of this guiding document by other agencies.