



PORT WASHINGTON Union Free School District

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Dear Port Washington Elementary Students and Families:

As adults, we often wrestle with our balance between work and family and between our duties and our mental and physical well-being. Certainly, the closing of schools and business due to the dangers of the coronavirus, and the reality of both children and parents doing work from home, has further challenged those balances.

After a week of focusing on connecting both teachers and students in remote ways and of mostly review and practice opportunities for those students, we are ready to begin the next phase of education. Whether you call it distance learning, virtual instruction, e-learning, or some other term, this phase will include the two elements that make teaching the art that it is—the presentation of new material and personal interaction between the teacher and the student.

Working with all of the Port Washington educators, I have prepared a brief outline here, in a Q & A format, of what you can expect in grades K-5 beginning on **Wednesday, April 1**. Your individual classroom teacher will provide more specifics next week through the virtual platform connections they have already created with your home.

- ***What will change on April 1?***
You can expect that there will be two lessons weekly that include direct virtual instruction from your classroom teacher: 15-20 minutes each for grades K-2 and 20-25 minutes each for grades 3-5.
- ***What will direct virtual instruction look like?***
The instruction will include a combination of synchronous (live/real time) and/or asynchronous (recorded or voice only) teaching. Either way, opportunities for interaction (such as answering student questions, giving feedback on work, or just “checking in”) between teacher and student will be provided by each teacher.
- ***What about “special” area instruction?***
Music, art, physical education, and library teachers will also be providing direct virtual instruction at each grade level. Because they serve much larger numbers of students (over 500 in some cases), you can expect direct virtual instruction once every week or two. Again, special area teachers will provide specifics to you next week.
- ***How will support staff and mandated services be provided?***
As with special area teachers, speech & language, math resource, resource room, reading, PEP, and ENL teachers will be providing direct virtual teaching lessons on a regular basis, but that will vary by individual student need. These teachers will also be in touch next week in order to set clear expectations for interaction.

- ***How will teachers have these lessons ready beginning next week?***
Teachers will be receiving ongoing training in direct virtual instruction. We ask for your patience while some of our teachers learn new technologies and platforms.
- ***What will all this look like at home?***
It is important to keep in mind that one hour of instruction a day is the New York State Department of Education's guideline for homebound students at the elementary level. Requiring excessive screen time from students, especially given the sharing of space, hardware, and bandwidth in many households, is not the objective. A balance of direct virtual instruction, independent work, reading, interaction with the teacher, and wellness activities that include plenty of play, is the objective.
- ***What about grading?***
Students should do work as required to the best of their abilities and circumstances and make their best effort. As you may know, all New York State 3-8 tests have been canceled for this year. Discussions about performance summaries and end-of-year student assessments are continuing.
- ***When do we begin?***
Wednesday, April 1! Classroom teachers will provide at least one direct virtual lesson on April 1, 2, or 3 and another on either April 6,7, or 8th. Twice weekly direct virtual instruction will begin after the spring recess on April 20th.

While we look forward to the reopening of our schools, and the marvelous personal chemistry that only face-to-face teaching can provide, we continue to do our very best to refine and improve our home/school connections and our opportunities for learning from a distance. Please don't hesitate to contact your school principal or me if you have any questions or concerns. Stay healthy and be well.

Very truly yours,



Michael J. Hynes, Ed.D.
Superintendent of Schools

Bonni Cohen

Bonni Cohen, Ed.D.
Principal, Manorhaven Elementary School

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