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March 30, 2020

Dear Somerville Public Schools Families and Staff,

We hope you are doing ok, despite all of the stress and anxiety during this challenging time. Thank you for all you are doing to support the city-wide efforts to contain the spread of COVID-19. As these efforts continue, new regulations are being put in place to help minimize the impact to families and businesses. We encourage you to call Somerville's 311 line if you have a specific question or concern, and they will connect you with the right individuals and resources. As we noted in Friday's communication, we are moving toward a more standardized approach to instructional delivery, informed by guidance we received last week and this morning from the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE). We have summarized DESE's guidance below. On Wednesday, please look for details of our district's plan for remote teaching and learning over the next several weeks.

## NEW INFORMATION AND RESOURCES

- **Reminder about Comcast Internet Essentials:** As we continue to distribute Chromebooks, we want to remind families that Comcast is offering two months of free internet service to families in need, through their Internet Essentials program. *If you qualify for the school free/reduced lunch program, you are eligible for this important service.* The Somerville Family Learning Collaborative and schools will be helping families who do not currently have internet service connect to this important resource. Information on how to apply and sign up for Internet Essentials from Comcast is available at: <https://internetessentials.com/>
- **DESE Guidance:** DESE issued general guidance to serve as a baseline for districts' development of a remote teaching and learning plan. DESE's guidelines are informed by the following three core beliefs:
  - Health, safety, and wellness are top priorities
  - A focus on equity and potential disproportionate impact on the most vulnerable students
  - Maintaining connections between school staff and students, and helping all students continue their learning

With these beliefs in mind, DESE's recommended remote learning model highlights the following:

- Schools support students to engage in meaningful and productive learning for approximately half the length of a regular school day, with learning taking place via a combination of educator-directed learning and student self-directed learning
- Remote learning focus on reinforcing skills already taught this school year and applying and deepening those skills, recognizing that in some cases, teachers and students may wish to continue with new material, particularly at the high school level. In those cases, schools should consider equity of access and support for all students.
- Recognizing that the individual student experience will vary depending on student age, individual and family needs, access and capacity for remote learning (including access to technology and the internet), and the ongoing health of students, families, and staff.

DESE's March 30, 2020 letter to families about remote learning can be accessed here: [English](#), [Spanish](#). Translations into additional languages will be posted at: <http://www.doe.mass.edu/covid19/>.

- **AP Exams:** Due to the COVID-19 health crisis, there will be no in-person AP Exams in 2020. Instead, College Board is creating 45-minute online exams designed to be taken at home. This website (<https://apstudents.collegeboard.org/coronavirus-updates>) has more details, free resources for students

to prepare for exams, and will have an exam schedule by April 3<sup>rd</sup>. Please check that website frequently for more updates from College Board. Please contact your student's AP teacher or Melanie Kessler at [mkessler@k12.somerville.ma.us](mailto:mkessler@k12.somerville.ma.us) if you have questions.

- **Instrument Rentals:** The Somerville Public Schools has three major vendors for the rental of music instruments. Rick Saunders has been working with these companies to provide loaner instruments to families who have not been able to access their rental instruments. Both Needham Instruments and Acoustic Strings of New England are providing replacement instruments for students whose rental instrument is not accessible. At this time, we are still working to connect with Johnson String Instruments. Please contact Mr. Saunders [rsaunders@k12.somerville.ma.us](mailto:rsaunders@k12.somerville.ma.us) if you have any questions.
- **City's Notice on Eviction Moratorium:** On Saturday, Mayor Curtatone and the Board of Health announced an Emergency Order Establishing a Moratorium on Eviction Enforcement in the City of Somerville for the duration of the COVID-19 emergency. The order, which applies to both residential and commercial evictions and goes into effect immediately, prohibits the physical act of eviction within the city limits so as to provide for the health, safety and stability of those who live in and serve our community. Visit <https://www.somervillema.gov/evictionmoratorium> for the full announcement.
- **Just for Fun:** New York City's Museum of Modern Art offers some art-making activities families can do from home: <https://www.moma.org/magazine/articles/254>.

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## CONTINUING PROGRAMS AND IMPORTANT LINKS

### Continuing Programs and Resources

- **Breakfast and Lunch Grab-and-Go Meals** can be picked up Mondays-Fridays, 9:00-11:00 a.m. at the East Somerville Community School, Healey School, West Somerville Neighborhood School, and Winter Hill Community Innovation School. No ID is required. Bring a bag if you are picking up for multiple family members, and please remember to dress appropriately for the weather as we may ask you to stand out in the elements to ensure that we follow social distancing norms.
- **Other food-related resources in the city**, visit [www.somerville.k12.ma.us/food-resources](http://www.somerville.k12.ma.us/food-resources).
- **Chromebook Distribution.** Chromebook distribution to students in grades 3-12 who do not currently have a device at home is continuing this week at each school. Schools are reaching out to students with information on distribution days and times.
- **Distribution of Diapers:** Starting this week, distribution of free diapers and wipes to families with babies or young children will continue on **Wednesdays only from 9:00-11:00a.m.** at each of the four school food distribution sites (East Somerville Community School, Healey School, West Somerville Neighborhood School and Winter Hill Community Innovation School). Diaper distribution will continue through April and while supplies last.

### Curriculum Resources and Tech Support Available Online

- High quality grade-level home learning resources: [www.somerville.k12.ma.us/home-learning](http://www.somerville.k12.ma.us/home-learning).
- High school online resources: [www.somerville.k12.ma.us/shs](http://www.somerville.k12.ma.us/shs)
- List of resources from the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education to help students stay engaged in their learning while at home: <http://www.doe.mass.edu/covid19/ed-resources.html>
- WGBH's new online Distance Learning Center: [www.wgbh.org/distance-learning-center](http://www.wgbh.org/distance-learning-center)
- PBS LearningMedia: <https://mass.pbslearningmedia.org>

- If you are having trouble with your device, please submit a request for support using this [Somerville Public Schools Remote Tech Support Contact Form](#).
- Language Support for Technology Questions: SPS parents/students who need language assistance with technology should call 311 or email [311updates@somervillema.gov](mailto:311updates@somervillema.gov). A bilingual educator will contact you to assist you. Dial (617) 666-3311 if you are calling from a number outside of Somerville.

Other Important Links

- Visit [www.somervillema.gov/coronavirus](http://www.somervillema.gov/coronavirus) for the most current information on COVID-19.
- Visit [www.somervillema.gov/coronavirushelp](http://www.somervillema.gov/coronavirushelp) for additional resources and ways to contribute during the COVID-19 crisis.
- Talking to your kids about COVID-19: [www.somerville.k12.ma.us/TalkingAboutCoronavirus](http://www.somerville.k12.ma.us/TalkingAboutCoronavirus).

Please look for details about our district remote teaching and learning plan in Wednesday's communication.  
Thank you.

Mary Skipper, Superintendent