

# John F. Kennedy Middle School

## Enfield Public Schools

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***“Respect, Diligence, Dignity”***

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JFK School Community,

We hope this update finds you and your family both safe and healthy. The purpose of this communication is two-fold. First, to commend all of our school community members for their collective effort during these trying times. Second, we want to provide you with a comprehensive guide regarding how academic terms and grading accountability will be assessed for distance learning. We apologize for the breadth of this communication, but it is absolutely essential that we all have a shared understanding of the information below.

During these unprecedented times, we have all experienced societal shifts regarding our behaviors and daily lives. Protecting both our health and wellbeing is the priority. Checking on our loved ones outside of our immediate households, ensuring we are stocked with basic supplies, worrying about the economic ramifications are just the starting points. Moreover, you are perhaps faced with situations that are much more complex and stressful. We hope to serve as both a support and provide a sense of normalcy to your children during this pandemic.

As a public school, we were faced with many challenges that we have never experienced. Educating 1200 students with diverse needs and varying ability levels was thrust upon 100 educators who had no notice and limited familiarity with a distance learning model. The evolution of this endeavor has been both tumultuous and enlightening. The collective efficacy, initiative, creativity, and passion our educators placed into this challenge are beyond commendable. We are humbled and appreciative of their efforts. This shift was not without its moments of strife and sheer frustration; nevertheless, there are countless moments of innovation, caring, and kindness extended to our students. During these difficult times, they stood up and faced the challenges head-on. We extend our utmost appreciation and admiration to each of them. Our educators were a driving force in all of this, but the glue that kept it all together was you.

The parents/guardians and caregivers who dedicated countless hours of their time to ensuring our children were taken care of. Caring for their wellbeing by calming their mental and emotional states while attempting to navigate the unknown is a very difficult balance. A large piece of this challenge involved educating our students. Shifting from parent/guardian to educator was imaginably a *trying* experience. We both commend and appreciate your commitment to our students, which brings us to those whom we are most proud of: our students.

Our students will never forget that time in middle school when school ceased, and they had to learn from home. Faced with the challenges that were presented by virtual learning, the frustrations caused by not seeing their peers, the emotional rollercoaster of the entire event. However, they will also have vivid memories of the extended time they were able to share with their loved ones and events/stories that occurred because of their time with those closest to them.

While the world attempts to figure out what the safest steps for society are, we need to take a deep breath and soak in the silver linings that present themselves.

As organizations attempt to solve complex issues that they have never experienced, the public school systems are not an exception. One of the most complex structures within any educational institution is the manner in which merit is awarded and accountability is recorded. Assessing student learning can be both fluid and concretely defined. Checks for understanding with a simple thumbs-up gesture within a classroom setting or professional certification exams that determine career advancement are examples of the simplicity or complexity of assessing learning.

Our distribution of a ten-day work packet (Phase 1) on March 12 was intended to provide activities to our students for what we thought was going to be a short break. We learned that this was not the case and quickly organized ourselves with the resources available to us. Microsoft Teams became a viable option to communicate with students. Every JFK student had an email address, and educators were able to organize classrooms within the platform. At the same time, we extended a digital survey to our school community with the intention of assessing who did not have Wi-Fi or device access.

Utilizing this information and learning that an extended closure was imminent, we organized more materials which we titled Phase 2. We observed that students were logging into the learning platform, educators were communicating with students, and that teaching and learning had shifted to a hybrid of sorts. Both *access* and limited technology created complex and inequitable circumstances for *everyone*. These challenges coupled with ever-increasing COVID constraints compounded to create a very difficult situation. In an effort to ensure there is equitability, we ensured that Phase 2 was distributed with digital accessibility and in traditional hardcopy packets. Phase 2 packets provided five days of work and carried us through to the week prior to our April break.

Phase 3 was distributed on Tuesday, April 21, and is broken down into both packets and project-based work. This structure provides even greater flexibility to diverse learning needs and modes of submission. Both Phase 1 and 2 required that core content areas (Math, English, Social Studies, Science) were mandatory, and non-core/elective subjects were provided as academic enrichment. Phase 3 shifted to lightened course loads with **all** subject matters being mandatory. With that, we have relaxed submission deadlines for all packets and will provide additional supports for those who may need them. Our intention is to provide a meaningful yet manageable distance learning experience. Our traditional expectations must be reconsidered to provide needed flexibility in our current conditions. Ultimately, JFK educators will have discretion over both assigned grades and distance learning submissions. Please utilize one of the methods available to submit your child's completed packets. Again, your support in ensuring all materials are submitted is imperative.

Assigning a grade to distance learning activities presents a complex challenge that, again, we have never been faced with. Philosophical differences, diverse personal values/beliefs systems, and opinions are so individualized it is impossible to create an agreed-upon metric. Difficult decisions were made regarding marking periods and grading. Considerations and judgements were made with the circumstances of *all* families and students. Additionally, we advocate for *all* JFK Middle School students who deserve equitable and success-focused parameters. We are also aware that further exceptions and latitude may be afforded based upon individual student needs. In this case, appropriate faculty and administration will assist in supporting the student. Under Connecticut Department of Education guidance, we have

developed the following parameters concerning the grading process for the remainder of the 2019-2020 school year.

Respectfully,

JFK Middle School

### **Distance Learning Term Calculations: *How are grades going to be calculated?***

<b>Term 3 Report Card</b>	<b>Term 4 Report Card</b>
<i>Grading Window: Ending 4/20/20</i> Grade determined by the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Core courses (ELA, Math, Science, Social Studies)<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Student's grade as of 3/12/20</li><li>Grade from Phase 1 and 2 Packets</li></ul></li><li>Elective and non-core courses<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Grade as of 3/12 or improved grade from optional enrichment opportunities</li></ul></li></ul>	<i>Grading Window: 4/21/20 - Last Day (TBD)</i> Grade determined by the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Phase 3 Packets and <b>ALL</b> content area activities</li><li>Academic project</li><li>Additional classwork assigned by educator</li></ul>

### **Grade Equivalent: *What is being graded? What is it worth?***

<b>Term</b>	<b>Submitted Item</b>	<b>Value</b>
Report Card 3	Phase 1 Packet (core subjects) (submitted electronically)	Equivalent to 100% of a summative course assignment/assessment (e.g., unit test, project, lab, etc.) or plus 5 total grade points (whichever is greater).
	Phase 2 Packet (core subjects) (submitted electronically)	Equivalent to 100% of a summative course assignment/assessment (e.g., unit test, project, lab, etc.) or plus 5 total grade points (whichever is greater).
	Elective assignments/enrichment	Will provide a grade as of 3/12 and any additional enrichment work will be calculated toward grade improvement.
Report Card 4	Phase 3 Packet (All subjects counted) (submitted electronically)	Equivalent to 100% of a summative course assignment/assessment (e.g., unit test, project, lab, etc.)
	Academic projects	Standard grading
	Additional classwork	Standard grading

**Report Card Scoring Breakdown: *How will this be displayed on my report card? What grades can I earn?***

Marking Period	Potential Mark (Grade)
Term 3 Report Card	Letter Grade or Distance Learning Incomplete (DL-I)
Term 4 Report Card	Distance Learning <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pass (DL-P)</li> <li>• Pass w/Distinction (DL-PD)</li> <li>• Incomplete (DL-I)</li> </ul>
Term 3 Quarter Courses	Will provide a grade as of 3/12 and any additional enrichment work will be calculated toward grade improvement.
Semester 2 Courses	Distance Learning <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pass (DL-P)</li> <li>• Pass w/Distinction (DL-PD)</li> <li>• Incomplete (DL-I)</li> </ul>
Year Long Courses	Letter Grade = Avg. of all 4 Marking Terms, numeric average

**Scoring Rubric: *What do these grades mean? How do I earn a particular grade?***

Mark	Academic Expectations	Numerical Equivalent
Pass with distinction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All phase packet(s) 100% completed and electronically submitted</li> <li>• As observed/experienced by individual educators, student efforts exceeded distance learning expectations</li> </ul>	100%
Pass	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Submitted work fulfilled minimal to satisfactory distance learning expectations</li> </ul>	100%
Incomplete*	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Student did not engage in distance learning</li> </ul>	50-59%
Letter Grade	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Standard scale when applicable to standing assignments</li> </ul>	

\*Any incomplete work must be electronically submitted to appropriate educator by the close of the 2019-20 school year. This extended submission window is available to students who choose to submit work for the purpose of grade improvement and who are late turning in the assignment. Beginning March 13, 2020, students will not be penalized for late work submissions. Please contact the educator directly via email for clarification on any specific assignments.

**Dates: When are items due? How do I submit? Where are these items?**

Item	Distribution Date	Due Date	Submission	Location	Notes
Phase 1	March 12	April 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Scanned/Photograph</li><li>• Email</li><li>• MS TEAMS</li></ul>	<a href="#">HERE</a>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Core classes</li><li>• 10-day packet</li></ul>
Phase 2	April 6	April 20			
Phase 3	April 21	May 20 <i>*pending</i>			<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• All content areas</li><li>• 10-day packet</li><li>• Project-based</li><li>• Weekly assignments</li></ul>

\*We understand that the above table provides dates that have passed. We are attempting to provide flexible deadlines for distance learning submissions. The traditional school setting provided *all* that is required for the teaching and learning process. The home setting is not equipped with these resources. We want to provide flexibility to parents/guardians and ample time and opportunity for students to submit their distance learning materials.