



We make a difference in Enfield - every child, every day.

Christopher Drezek; Superintendent of Schools; [cdrezek@enfieldschools.org](mailto:cdrezek@enfieldschools.org)

1010 Enfield Street • ENFIELD, CONNECTICUT 06082

TEL: 860.253.6533 • FAX: 860.253.6515 • [WWW.ENFIELDSCHOOLS.ORG](http://WWW.ENFIELDSCHOOLS.ORG)

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Dear Parents, Staff, and Students of the Enfield Public Schools,

As we continue with our distance learning plan, I wanted to provide an update for everyone on our progress and communicate changes taking place. As you know, Governor Lamont has not altered his executive order that all Connecticut schools remain closed until May 20th. We all realize this extended closure is longer than anyone anticipated and has caused additional anxiety for families, students, and staff. We want you to know that district staff is committed to continue working tirelessly to make this unprecedented closure as easy as possible for students and families.

When we first began our distance learning program, we relied on paper packets of instructional activities. This was done to ensure all students had equal access to educational opportunities, especially those who did not have access to an electronic device in their homes. Over the past two weeks, staff have been working tirelessly to gather and distribute an electronic device to any family who needed one so we could begin transitioning our distance learning to a more virtual platform. With all students having access to a device, teachers can begin the transition of customizing their classrooms to try to replicate a "normal" classroom experience for our students as best as possible. We certainly understand that nothing can replace the interaction between a teacher and a student in our school buildings, but our hope is to make this experience as close to normal as possible for our kids. I realize how silly this sounds, trying to create a classroom experience from your living room, but in these unprecedented times, we believe this is the best way to ensure our students get through this time successfully. We also realize that the demands parents have from working remotely themselves can impact their child's ability to interact with their teachers. As I've said from the beginning, this plan is not perfect; we all need to be flexible to accommodate the needs of everyone involved. If you're having scheduling issues, I ask that you reach out to your child's teacher or principal, as I know everyone is doing whatever they can to make sure our students get the resources they need.

I've also been receiving many questions about grading since our school closure began. If you have a student at JFK or Enfield High School, you should have already received guidance on how grading will be conducted for the remainder of the year. For our elementary school parents, a plan is in the final stages of development as we speak and will be communicated from principals in the coming days. I've asked each principal to share these updates directly with parents, as I believe this message is more effective coming directly from your child's school instead of my office. Realizing parents may have questions, this process will enable questions to be answered in a timelier manner, coming directly from your child's principal. The one directive I did share with our principals regarding grading is that no student should be penalized because of this school closure. I want to thank our administrative team for coming up with

an equitable grading system that gives our students the best chance to thrive, without the possibility of their grades regressing because of this pandemic.

Although we still hold out hope that we will be able to return to school this year, the possibility that this closure will remain in place for the duration of the school year has forced us to make additional plans for our high school graduation ceremony this June. At the moment, we are crossing our fingers that we can still hold a traditional, in-person ceremony at Enfield High School at some point; however, in the event public health officials do not allow this, we have begun planning for a virtual graduation. Ms. Clark and I had the opportunity to hold a virtual meeting with any member of the senior class who was interested to gather seniors' input on what they would like to see in a virtual graduation, if necessary. Ms. Clark is continuing to meet with senior class officers and student leaders for their suggestions, as this is their day, and we have a plan in place to hold a virtual graduation in June. Information on this program will be coming from Ms. Clark next week, but our focus is to make this day as special as possible for our seniors.

We realize how challenging these times have been, and I can share firsthand how difficult this experience has been for our teachers. I don't have to tell you how much they miss seeing your children every day, but what you don't see is the stress each of our teachers go through each day to try and make this experience for their students perfect. I've never met a teacher who chose this profession to work from his or her dining room table over a video conference. It is the personal interactions, the hugs, the excitement of a student sharing what they did over the weekend that our teachers signed up for. Most importantly, it is the lasting impact they have on each and every one of our kids that defines who they are. I've had to remind teachers I've spoken with that this process will never be perfect, but you know your child's teachers, and the word *never* is not in their vocabularies.

Next week is teacher appreciation week, and I want to extend my deepest appreciation to all our teachers for everything they do – and I ask all of you to do the same, if you are able. Remember the joy your children felt the first time they saw their teacher during this closure, and do not forget that the joy was even greater on the other side. Hearing from you next week will mean the world to our teachers, and everyone can use some good news right now. Our teachers are used to wearing many hats during the day: teacher, nurse, counselor, hand holder, nose wiper – and the list goes on. I hope everyone understands just how hard this time has been on all of our teachers and joins me in thanking them for everything they do.

I hope everyone is staying safe and continuing to adhere to the guidelines we've been given. I don't know what the future holds, but I do know we will get through this – and we will get through it together.

Thank you - and stay well,

Chris Drezek, Superintendent of Schools