



SOUTHERN BERKSHIRE REGIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICT

March 31, 2020

Dear SBRSD Parents and Caregivers:

Thank you so much for your patience and support over these past few weeks! We recognize that families are dealing with many new worries and responsibilities, and we truly understand how challenging this has been for all of you. Please know that our hearts go out to you, your children, your families, and everyone affected by COVID-19. We are grateful for all our dedicated SBRSD faculty and staff! Special thanks to the Director of Buildings, Grounds, and Food Service and all of our custodians who keep our buildings clean and sanitized, our food service staff who provide meals to families in need, and to all those in our community working around the clock to keep us safe.

As we promised in a previous update, we are providing you with a detailed SBRSD Remote Learning Plan. We are doing our best to balance the needs of many people who belong to our school community, including students, staff, and families. Like you, our SBRSD staff members have real lives, real worries, and real families of their own. Our SBRSD family is grateful that they have had the last week or so to plan thoughtfully and have had a chance to care for themselves and those they love, and we appreciate your understanding.

The District has accomplished a lot these past weeks! The information that follows reflects the thinking of many members of our SBRSD team. Our brief time away from school has allowed us to explore possibilities, to learn from one another and other districts, and to plan in a reflective way. Together we have used our time to make connections with our faculty and staff, curriculum and district leaders, principals, health officials, town leaders, and the School Committee. We listened and learned from our colleagues who are parents of children in other school systems being inundated with a frenetic, fast-paced overload of online learning that seems hard to sustain and for us – impossible to sustain. The team instead chose to collaborate and seek other points of view in an effort to learn from the perspectives of our neighbors, and to work with the resources available to us here in the Southern Berkshire Regional School District.

Beth Regulbuto

Superintendent

Jane Burke

School Committee Chair

Jonathan Bruno

School Committee Vice Chair

School Committee Members

Arthur J. Batacchi, Jr.

Jeffrey Blaugrund

Maryellen Brown

Jane Burke

Marcella Bush

Danile Kelly

Bonnie Silvers

David Travis

SBRSD

The ability to take additional time to thoughtfully plan our approach helped us develop a remote learning system that is manageable, meaningful, sustainable, and designed with students, staff, and families in mind. This approach is how we will navigate the ever-changing world of education until at least May 4th, and we believe that taking these additional days to plan for the long-term will serve us well in the days, weeks, and months to come. The information that follows is the result of our collaborative planning efforts, the work of our colleagues across the state, and collective thinking. I am truly grateful for the contributions of many. Please keep in mind that we are regularly receiving updates from the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education and other key stakeholders with guidance and will provide further updates when available.

We anticipate remote learning will start this week by April 3, 2020, as we continue to collaboratively work with our staff to create and develop remote learning opportunities for all students in these challenging times. We are preparing a packet of materials for each family that contains a combination of learning activities that can be completed through a variety of mediums, and we hope to be utilizing the bus transportation companies to assist us with deliveries of the packets during this closure. I will continue to follow up with our families with additional information as this plan is implemented.

I want to take this opportunity to thank you - our incredible SBRSD students and families. Each of you are amazing, and your kind and encouraging messages have made all the difference during this difficult time. We are so proud to see our children and school families continuing to do the things that reflect our SBRSD Core Values outside of school, and we continue to be in awe of our school community's endless generosity, compassion, and selflessness. We miss everyone terribly, as it is just not the same here without you! We will do all that we can to maintain close connections with you during the school closure and beyond, and we continue to send good wishes to everyone for health and happiness in the days ahead. As always, we are here for you if you need anything.

Sincerely,

Beth Regulbuto
Superintendent of Schools

Table of Contents

[Plan for Long-Term School Closure](#)

[Governor Baker’s 03-23-2020 “Essential Services and Revised Gatherings Order”](#)

[SBRSD Remote Learning](#)

[The Purpose of Remote Learning](#)

[Remote Learning Guidance](#)

[Getting Started: Here’s What You Need to Know](#)

[SBRSD Remote Learning—A Paradigm Shift](#)

[SBRSD Remote Learning Start Date](#)

[Office Hours and Length of Day](#)

[Secondary School will Not Issue Letter Grades- Credit/No-Credit](#)

[Caregiver/Teacher Communication](#)

[Federal Government Announces State Waivers on Standardized Tests](#)

[Advanced Placement \(AP\) Tests: Update from College Board](#)

[SBRSD COVID 19 Information and Updates](#)

[Verifying Family Contact Information](#)

[Student & Family Supports](#)

[Special Education Supports](#)

[English Language Learner Supports](#)

[Other Supports & Resources](#)

[What You Need to Know about Technology](#)

[Tech Tools](#)

[Student Data Privacy](#)

[Deploying Devices for Students](#)

I. Plan for Long-Term School Closure

As we settle into a new way of life, we should prepare for an extended school closure. Currently, our return to school date is May 4, 2020 per the Governor's Executive Order.

Governor Baker's 03-23-2020 "Essential Services and Revised Gatherings Order"

II. SBRSD Remote Learning

The Purpose of Remote Learning

Through a series of virtual conversations and in collaboration with other public school districts, the administrative team refined its approach to remote learning through this process. The outcome of these collaborative conversations with our colleagues is reflected in our shared Vision Statement.

The purpose of remote learning is best expressed by our vision statement: "to be resilient, curious, ethical global citizens who embrace the challenges of an ever-changing world." In the days, weeks, and months ahead, we have encouraged our educators to take this vision to heart. Teachers will no longer be expected to focus on mastery of content for students; instead, the purpose of remote learning in the SBRSD Schools will be to engage students in deeper learning.

Per our 2019-2020 school calendar the 185th day of the school year is June 19, 2020. Please know that the District may re-evaluate this in the future.

Learning is vitally important, but there are different ways of acquiring new knowledge. A great article from *Education Week*, ["Remember, Online Learning Isn't the Only Way to Learn Remotely."](#) by Kate Ehrenfeld Gardoqui points out, "This time of school closure provides a magnificent opportunity for us to envision the kind of learning that is different from what happens in classrooms." This is a great time to try new ideas and new ways of thinking!

Remote Learning Guidance

We recognize that the level of instruction for remote learning will not be equivalent to what is taught in the traditional classroom setting. We need to be more sensitive than ever to the needs of our students and families. We recognize that parents and guardians will be in charge of their children's learning, and they will likely have less familiarity with content and pedagogical knowledge; thus, students will have less explicit structure, support, and time for learning than they would receive in a typical school day in our buildings. To that end, we have shared the following factors for our staff to keep in mind as they engage in this new model of education:

- Students will be participating in self-directed learning in alternative educational settings with less structure, and lots of other things happening in their lives.
- Parents/Guardians cannot be expected to take your place as instructors; they may not know the content and even if they know the content, they may not know the pedagogy. For example, the elementary math we now teach is 100% different than the elementary math many of us learned.

- Parents/Guardians also may be juggling work or working from home, taking care of younger children or family members, or dealing with illnesses.
- Learning time may be modified, and we have developed a framework related to this.
- We encourage educators to work together in teams and to be mindful of the amount of work that is given to students and families.
- As educators plan and we navigate the new learning environment, we have stressed how critical it is that they keep in mind their most vulnerable populations. Consider the needs of our students with disabilities, students for whom English is a second language, students who live outside of the district, students in single parent homes, students in families where both parents work outside the home, families with multiple siblings and limited devices, families with limited resources, etc. (Families in need of additional support in these types of circumstances should see the [Student and Family Supports](#) section below.)

We have shared the following *requirements* for staff as we begin Remote Learning on or about April 3, 2020:

1. Learning activities should support reinforcement and practice of previously taught curriculum and may also include enrichment activities. We believe it is important to limit our students' screen time. Please note that many of these activities can be done without a device. [Here](#) are some really cool examples of what that can look like.
2. Activities should engage the *independent* learning level, and students should be able to work on those activities with minimal support from parents and caregivers.
3. Teachers will issue Credit/No Credit at the completion of the term. During this time, teachers will provide feedback on work submitted.
4. Timewise, only plan for about three hours a day working on what we would expect students to do if they were in class.
5. Parents are encouraged to provide support where able to students to maximize enrichment opportunities.
6. Elaborate projects or materials (including devices, printers, apps, etc.) will not be required in order to engage in remote learning.
7. Assignments/activities should be provided on a regular schedule, but not necessarily daily. Some examples include:
 - a. Staff could post assignments every Monday morning with the expectation that students work on them a little bit every day that week, including explicit suggestions for how students can break large tasks into manageable daily sections.
 - b. Staff could give students a menu of options of possible activities and suggest they complete a certain number of tasks each week.
8. Work will not receive a number or letter grade, but feedback can and should be given for any submitted student work.
9. Regular communication with students will help maintain a sense of classroom community and is strongly encouraged. Communication can take many forms including group emails or posts to Google classroom, written feedback on students work, or check-ins with students by phone or by using a video chat platform.

The most important outcome is for students to feel cared for and supported by their teachers, and to be meaningfully engaged in learning activities for some portion of each day. We want teachers to stay in touch with students and their families during this difficult time, providing guidance, support and encouragement along the way.

To achieve these ends, we have provided the following *suggestions* for staff:

1. Co-plan and crowdsource activities with your colleagues (e.g., classroom aides, general education, special education, teacher of English Language Learners, counselors, nurses, librarians, Title I teachers, and other student support staff).
2. Employ resources or activities available at home (e.g. games).
3. Staff do not need to develop traditional lessons from scratch every day. They can make use of on-line resources and direct students to those.
4. Engage students' imaginations and problem-solving skill sets and let them work on projects with their siblings. See [here](#) again for an example of what this can look like.
5. Not all assignments need to culminate in a tangible product of some kind.
6. Design units to offer cross-curricular applications.
7. Incorporate problem-solving and inquiry-based activities.
8. Facilitate student-led questioning and discussions.
9. Incorporate real-world problem-solving activities.
10. Meet diverse learning preferences by allowing students to make choices for how to demonstrate their skill mastery.
11. Explore current events and foster critical thinking by integrating media, reading, writing, speaking, and listening skills into multifaceted lessons.
12. Stimulate creativity by incorporating graphic, visual, auditory, media, and print resources and experiences.
13. Explore ways to integrate the [SBRSD District Improvement Plan](#) and our vision, and core values into your interdisciplinary or grade level team lessons.

These suggestions and recommendations are subject to change based on anticipated forthcoming guidance from DESE.

III. Getting Started: Here's What You Need to Know

The traditional school day as we once knew it has completely changed, and this is no longer business as usual. We do not know what the future holds, and we recognize that you must balance your children's educational needs with your family's other demands. The expectations that follow have been developed for students, staff, and families, and with these uncertainties in mind.

SBRSD Remote Learning—A Paradigm Shift

Job one for educators in the SBRSD Schools is to care for yourself and others. We are in the midst of a global health crisis, necessitating a shift in our teaching and learning priorities. We cannot possibly replicate the school day under these circumstances, nor can we expect parents to take on the role of their child's teachers. None of us knows what the future holds, and we recognize that

there may be times when other circumstances may take precedence over remote learning. With this in mind, we have encouraged staff to provide students with fun and interesting enrichment activities. Likewise, they should develop consistent ways for students to stay connected to them, to their peers, and to their learning community. Staff are not expected to teach a daily lesson. We have suggested staff think creatively and find ways to enrich students' lives through deeper learning. They should reach out to students and families to let them know they care. SBRSD Remote Learning is not intended to replicate the traditional learning environment or the number of hours in a school day. We hope to focus on activities that students and families can do outside (while practicing safe social distancing) and try to avoid assignments that always require a device. Students can write in journals, observe nature, watch Ted Talks of interest and share their learning (either in a Google Hangouts Meet or in writing)—the possibilities are endless. Remote learning in the SBRSD Schools is not intended to replace the academic day, so none of us should feel pressure to replicate what was once accomplished in the classroom.

We are all about to embark on quite an adventure together. Like any adventure we may have some butterflies or fears of the unknown, but it is exciting to think of exploring this new landscape together and to forge new paths to get there! Staff have been given the freedom to plan lessons and activities that let us, and our students get off the highway and take some detours; to use resources that allow us to explore in ways different from what we typically do, and to reach our destinations at our own pace. And most importantly, like all good adventures, we will not go it alone, we will do this together!

Over these next weeks, staff will be thoughtfully planning our remote learning experience; as they do so, they will keep the following in mind:

- **Support student choice/student agency.** Design lessons and activities to include options for students, for example, a menu of choices, a variety of materials and resources to choose from, different lengths of activities, and tapping into different learning styles and modalities.
- **Differentiate.** Consistently consider the process, product, pacing, and resources in lessons and activities to ensure all students can participate in some way.
- **Focus on deeper dives into learning.** Engage and challenge students in new ways. Now is the time to try that thing we've always wanted to do, and that we know will excite students and reinvigorate their love of learning.
- **Collaborate.** Rely on each other and on the host of resources out there to support students. Plan together. Share resources and ideas.
- **Communicate, communicate, communicate.** With students, with parents and with each other. This can take the form of email, Google docs, via Google Classroom if you are using that already, video conferencing, and telephone just to name a few. Reach out and support one another. Sustaining relationships is a key objective, and it will get us through the hard times.
- **Student feedback.** Communication also includes feedback on student learning. We are taking the emphasis off traditional grading and encouraging feedback on student work instead.

SBRSD Remote Learning Start Date

On **Friday, April 3, 2020** we will begin remote learning in the SBRSD Schools. You will hear from your teachers prior to the launch of remote learning, and you should feel free to share your thoughts about how this new environment will impact your child.

Office Hours and Length of Day

School as we knew it a few weeks ago has completely changed. The length of our teachers' workdays will be flexible, customizable, and pared down considerably, as many of them are juggling the same responsibilities as our SBRSD families. They are not expected to hold traditional school hours, nor are they expected to adhere to the traditional curriculum. Staff will be expected to have office hours each school day so students and families can connect via email or talk by phone. Educators' primary role will be one of support for students and families as they explore topics in more depth and navigate changes in their day-to-day lives.

Secondary School will Not Issue Letter Grades- Credit/No-Credit

At the middle and high school levels, no grades will be issued for the third quarter. Teachers are asked to record credit/no credit based on the work that was completed through our last day of school (March 12, 2020). Students will be given the opportunity to make up work (assigned prior to March 12, 2020) if they are in danger of not receiving credit.

All remote learning work K-12 that is completed in the fourth quarter during the time of school closure will also be credit/no credit.

Caregiver/Teacher Communication

SBRSD staff will work with families and establish a plan for how best to stay in touch during this period of school closure. They may contact you by phone, email, Skype, FaceTime, or Google Hangouts, and staff will do their best to make proper accommodations if you do not have access to certain modes of communication. Specialists (e.g., ELL coordinator, special educators, related service providers, Title I teachers, counselors), will be contacting parents and caregivers directly and schedule a time to talk. We know that all staff will do their best to offer ongoing feedback and support to our students and families.

Waivers on Standardized Tests

The Governor has proposed legislation to waive or modify the requirements for standardized testing subject to approval by the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education. We will provide further updates when available.

Advanced Placements from College Board

- The College Board provided the following update concerning Advanced Placement Tests
Traditional face-to-face exam administrations will not take place. Students will take a 45-minute online free-response exam at home.
- Some students may want to take the exam sooner rather than later, while the content is still fresh. Other students may want more time to practice. For each AP subject, there will be 2

different testing dates. We will share when the dates when the College Board has released them.

- AP curricula are locally developed, and we defer to local decisions on how best to help students complete coursework. To be fair to all students, some of whom have lost more instructional time than others, the exam will only include topics and skills most AP teachers and students have already covered in class by early March.
- The College Board will allow any student already registered for an exam to cancel.

Please refer to the following link for additional information:

<https://apstudents.collegeboard.org/coronavirus-updates>

SBRSD COVID 19 Information and Updates

Local COVID-19 information and previous communications can be found at [SBRSD Schools](#) (see the COVID-19 menu on the homepage). If you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to contact me, your building principal, or Mrs. Jeanne Moran, our Nurse Leader at jmoran@sbrsd.org. We will continue to include additional resources and information in future SBRSD communications.

Verifying Family Contact Information

Given increased reliance on email and other forms of communication during this time, we would like to remind families to periodically review and update their contact information. Your contact information can be verified in PlusPortals as well as on the School Messenger app. Families with changes in contact information should inform Chris Thompson at cthompson@sbrsd.org.

IV. Student and Family Supports

The period of school closure may create a variety of challenges in our community, as everything changed practically overnight with COVID-19 in our society and in our public schools. People with higher levels of cognitive flexibility and adaptability are able to adjust better to the changes around us. Now, more than ever, there is a need to explicitly teach the skills that build resilience in our students. Similarly, this pandemic is promoting discrimination and xenophobia in some circles, and this reminds us how important it is for all people to be aware of their cultural identities, how we view difference and ability, and how we promote respect for others. Whether your child and your family are part of a population with dedicated support, such as Special Education and English Learner Education program, or your unique circumstances require different resources and opportunities than the typical family, we want to provide all SBRSD children what they need to succeed.

Especially in this uncertain time, the SBRSD Schools remain steady in our core values of “community and care.” As educators, we know that our students' basic needs must be met, and they must have the proper tools before they can learn. As we engage in online learning opportunities, we have asked all staff to be observant of students and families who have not communicated regularly during this period of school closure. Staff are encouraged to reach out our families. These check-in's are opportunities to ensure our students and families remain

connected and engaged in learning, but also as a way to stay aware of your needs. Families are encouraged to share with staff any challenges they are currently facing that will make it difficult for their child to engage fully with their remote learning. Support staff, including members of the Counseling, English Learner Education, and Special Education departments, continue to remain available to you and can be reached via their school email addresses or school voicemail (staff will check each weekday).

As part of this process, we have reached out to families in need of access to school lunch services. If you have any need for food services, please reach out to Food Services Director Jeremy Wells at meals@sbrsd.org or 844-236-9720. Families can also view additional food resources throughout South County on our website sbrsd.org.

Students with Disabilities

The District will provide equal access to the curriculum for all students with disabilities, in accordance with Guidance issued by DESE. If you have questions or concerns please contact Sandi Hubbard, Director of Student Services, at shubbard@sbrsd.org.

Special education teachers can have particularly close connections with their students; therefore, communication with families and a continued connection with school during this challenging time is of paramount importance to us. Many of our special education teachers and related service providers have already been in contact with parents and caregivers. In some cases, students have reached out and connected with their teacher during this time. If they haven't already, special educators and related service providers will be reaching out to all families and caregivers over the next week to check in and discuss times for continued communication. They will be collaborating with related service providers, general educators, and others who support your student to ensure that recommendations for activities are appropriate and accessible. The collaboration will continue during this period of school closure. As always, please do not hesitate to contact your Special Education Liaison or Sandra Hubbard, Director of Student Services (shubbard@sbrsd.org or 413-229-8265, ext. 369) with any questions or concerns. We are here for you, and we want to support you.

English Language Learner Supports

The English Language Learner (ELL) teachers will be reaching out next week to SBRSD families in our program to discuss her plan to offer remote learning and to provide support to students and their families. Please let us know if we can assist in any way by sending an email/calling to Coordinator of English Learner Education, Christine Martin, cmartin@sbrsd.org or 413-229-8265, ext 331.

Other Supports & Resources

Education will look and feel radically different than it does during a typical school day. Educators and support staff will be an even greater source of support for students and families now than in the past. You will likely have many questions about COVID-19 and how to access community resources. Your Nurse Leader, Jeanne Moran, can assist in answering questions. All staff should

be familiar with the processes for providing additional support to families in need, as outlined in the [Student and Families Support](#) section. In addition to those options, there are some additional resources we believe will help all members of our school community:

- [SBRSD Community Resources](#): This document includes a list of resources that the SBRSD community may access during school closures. The document will be updated as more information becomes available.
- [SBRSD Coronavirus Updates](#): Click the link to access SBRSD communications and Town/State COVID-19 updates.
- SBRSD families, we need your help! We are hearing that children who are old enough to be home and unsupervised are getting together with friends. Please encourage students to go outside and get some fresh air and exercise but tell them that it is critical that they adhere to social distancing guidelines.

V. What You Need to Know about Technology

Tech Tools

We understand that not everyone will have the ability to access online resources; however, SBRSD educators may utilize Google Classroom and other G Suite tools. Additionally, educators may use PlusPortals for parent communication. SBRSD subscribes to many online resources that students are familiar with, such as Holt McDougal, EPIC, Learning A-Z, ThinkCentral, MobyMax, Learning Ally, and others.

Please reach out to your child's teacher should you need assistance with these tools. If you need additional technological support, contact our Technology Director, Chris Thompson cthompson@sbrsd.org or call 413-248-0767.

Student Data Privacy

Staff are expected to continue to follow the District's Acceptable Use Policy as outlined in the [Employee Handbook](#).

Deploying Devices for Students

On Thursday, March 19, 2020, SBRSD deployed laptops to students and families. If you did not receive one, but still need one, please contact Chris Thompson at cthompson@sbrsd.org. **The pickup location for devices will be at the Undermountain Elementary entrance on Thursday, April 2, 2020 from 11 a.m.-1 p.m.**

In terms of internet access, Spectrum is offering free Internet service to new customers for 60 days. High speed hotspots are available at each town library. Furthermore, FiberConnect is offering a free hotspot in Monterey across from the Pavilion behind the Fire Station and in Egremont at the Town Hall parking lot. Both have a WiFi called "FiberConnect-Free" without any password. New Marlborough has also boosted the WiFi in town at the Library, Town Hall and Fire Department so that residents and children have more service.