Reading Public Schools Remote Learning Plan

Our primary goal for the Reading Public Schools is for the safety, health, and well-being of all of our staff and students. We are committed to preparing and planning for any emergency that could have a large-scale impact on our community members and school operations. An important component of our plan includes exploring alternative instructional delivery methods. This document addresses how we will provide remote learning when our schools are closed for a prolonged period of time.

Our focus is to share this vision of remote learning and the guiding principles for how we can support student well-being and academic progress when the conditions for teaching and learning are not ideal or like anything we have experienced before.

This Remote Learning Plan outlines the implications for potentially significant, though temporary, adaptations in our current teaching practices. We want to acknowledge that for some of us, the amount of information shared in this plan, as well as the conditions of uncertainty, may be overwhelming. Our goal is to have all the available information in one shared document in order to help us begin to feel more comfortable about planning as we transition during this health crisis.

We will all work together to ensure that we support learning for our students.

To the extent possible, we will be following the guiding principles and recommendations for remote learning as outlined by Commissioner Jeff Riley in his memo on March 26, 2020 and supported by the Massachusetts Association of School Superintendents, the Massachusetts Charter Public School Association, the Massachusetts Association of School Committees, the Massachusetts Teachers Association, the American Federation of Teachers Massachusetts, and the Massachusetts Parent Teacher Association. These guiding principles and recommendations included the following information, which we have adapted for the Reading Public Schools:

I. **Guiding Principles: Supporting Student Learning and Holistic Needs**
   - The safety and well-being of students, families, and staff has been and must continue to be our top priority as an educational community. We are focused not only on physical health, safety, and nutrition, but also on social-emotional and mental health needs, which could intensify during this time.
   - This crisis disproportionately affects our most vulnerable students in terms of their physical and mental health, as well as academically. Equity needs to be a top consideration in local planning efforts as we make plans to manage an extended closure. To support these efforts, DESE will issue further guidance on how best to support special populations, including students with disabilities and English learners.
   - Maintaining connections between school staff and students is paramount, particularly for the most vulnerable members of our school communities. These connections will provide natural conduits to guide districts and schools in addressing students' specific needs.
   - Nothing can replace the in-person schooling experience, and we should not expect that remote learning can replicate the traditional school day.
   - The Reading Public Schools have an obligation to engage students in meaningful and productive learning opportunities through an appropriately structured educational program.
   - Remote learning is not synonymous with online learning. Remote learning can take place in a multitude of ways, including by helping students engage with resources in their everyday lives and in the natural world around them. Remote learning also provides unique opportunities to further engage students in the arts or interdisciplinary work. Finally, we must be conscious of the effects of increased screen time and seek balance between learning through technology and remote learning that happens offline to support students' curiosity and understanding.

II. **Recommended remote learning model:**
   - The Reading Public Schools will support students to engage in meaningful and productive learning by **providing broad learning opportunities that represent the range of learning throughout a school day/week**. We expect this learning to take place via a combination of educator-directed learning and student self-directed learning. This will look different depending on the developmental level of the students and the type of learning.

- We will be reinforcing skills already taught this school year and applying and deepening these skills. **While there may be circumstances that new material is introduced and taught, particularly at the high school, the work of our system will involve opportunities for additional teaching and curriculum learning when we return to school. This work will be done across content areas and levels**.
- 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 internet), and the ongoing health of students, families, and staff.

What does Remote Learning Look Like?
- Remote learning can encompass a wide variety of learning opportunities. While technology can be a supportive tool, we need to also consider ways that student learning can continue offline. This could include exploring the natural world, activities to support students' local communities (with appropriate social distancing), and engaging, hands-on projects and artistic creations that stem from students' own passions and experiences.[1]
- Examples of remote learning tools may include large-group video or audio conference calls, pre-recorded videos, 1:1 phone or video calls, email, work packets, projects, reading lists, online learning platforms, and other resources to effectively engage with students. These tools could be used to deliver lessons, provide individual student support, provide resources (including instructional material and student assignments), connect students to each other and their teacher, and provide feedback on student work. We must ensure that all of our online learning platforms meet confidentiality and student privacy standards.
- Lessons could include: pre-recorded lessons by teachers, live video lessons, portfolio record of work, paper based options such as workbook pages, project based learning, choice for kids, read alouds, discussion boards, website with activities by grade level, practice materials to maintain previously learned skills and other offline options.

What does a Remote Learning schedule look like?
- The following is a potential routine and structure for remote learning, recognizing the need for flexibility for individual districts and individual students within them:

    1. **Opportunity to connect with one or more educators multiple times per week.** For students who are at higher risk of learning loss, such as students with disabilities or English learners, we recommend that multiple educators and service providers provide additional opportunities for connection.
    2. **Access to multiple hours per day of academic content that is directed by educators**, which should focus on reinforcing skills already taught this school year and applying and deepening those skills. Depending on the level and course, there may introduction of new content.
    3. **Time each day for physical activity** based on recommendations from educators.
    4. **Additional daily time for enrichment activities such as the arts** (dance, media arts, music, theater, and visual arts)

[1] https://www.edweek.org/ew/articles/2020/03/16/remember-online-learning-isnt-the-only-way.html

I. **Introduction**

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, no teacher, and lots of other things happening in their lives.

● Parents/Guardians cannot be expected to take 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 will be significantly shorter, and we can expect that it will be reduced by at least half each day and week.

● We encourage educators to work together in teams and be mindful of the amount of work that is given to students and families.

● As educators plan and navigate the new learning environment, it is critical it is that they keep in mind the most vulnerable populations. Consider the needs of our students with disabilities, students for whom English is a second language, students who live outside of Reading, 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, and parents who may be working in essential roles, etc.

II. **We will begin to phase in the following guidelines on April 6th. We realize that the week of April 6th will be a phase in week for staff and families as they get acclimated to the technologies and that there will be different levels of implementation during that week.**

1. Learning activities should support reinforcement and practice of previously taught curriculum, enrichment activities, and may include new content in the higher grades. 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 examples of what that can look like.
2. Because of the demands on everyone's schedules (teachers and families), learning may be synchronous (in real time) or asynchronous (not in real time). Because of schedules, it is possible that staff and/or students may be posting or interacting outside of the traditional school day. If synchronous learning does occur with students, access to anything should be provided in alternative manners (i.e. through recordings, written summaries, etc.) for students who need reteaching or who are not able to access the lesson in real time.
3. Activities should engage the *independent* learning level, where developmentally appropriate, and students should be able to work on those activities with minimal support from parents and caregivers.
4. No summative assessments (i.e. end of unit tests) should be administered.
5. Timewise, only plan for about half (at most) of what we would expect students to do if they were in class.
6. Parents should only be expected to provide the same level of support they would provide for homework and no more.
7. Elaborate projects or materials (including devices, printers, apps, etc.) should not be required.

8. Assignments/activities should be given on a regular schedule, but new assignments do not need to be given every day. Some examples include:
   - 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.
   - Staff could give students a menu of options of possible activities and suggest they complete a certain number of tasks each week.
9. Work does not need to be graded, but feedback can and should be given for any submitted student work.

10. 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, phone calls, written feedback on students work, or check-ins with students using a video chat platform. Teachers may also need to communicate to individual students or families using the above tools. If phone calls are used, you can block your number on your cell phone by doing the following:

   To block your number from being displayed temporarily for a specific call:

   1. Enter *67.
   2. Enter the **number** you wish to **call** (including area code).
   3. Tap **Call**. The words "Private," "Anonymous," or some other indicator will appear on the recipient's phone instead of your mobile **number**.

   You can also set up google voice by following the directions located [here](#).

1. 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.

Suggestions for Staff for Implementation of Remote Learning

1. Co-plan and crowdsource activities with your colleagues (e.g., paraprofessionals, general education, special education, teachers of English Language Learners, counselors, nurses, librarians, and curriculum coordinators).
2. Staff are free to experiment, including deviating from the standards when appropriate and with educationally sound lessons. Curriculum coordinators building and district leaders have provided ideas, suggestions, links, and templates for staff to use, as well and can be available as needed to support planning.
3. Employ reusable or iterative activities when possible (e.g. games).
4. 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.
5. 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.
6. Not all assignments need to culminate in a tangible product of some kind.
7. Design units to offer cross-curricular applications.
8. Incorporate problem-solving and inquiry-based activities.
9. Facilitate student-led questioning and discussions.
10. Incorporate real-world problem-solving activities. (i.e. an interdisciplinary lesson on the current pandemic and the impact that it is having)
11. Meet diverse learning preferences by allowing students to make choices for how to demonstrate their skill mastery.
12. Explore current events and foster critical thinking by integrating media, reading, writing, speaking, and listening skills into multifaceted lessons.
13. Stimulate creativity by incorporating graphic, visual, auditory, media, and print resources and experiences.

III.   Office Hours and the Work Day

1.   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 Reading Public School families. They are not expected to hold traditional school hours, nor are they expected to adhere to the traditional curriculum. Staff will hold office hours at a minimum of twice a week at the elementary level and three times/week at the secondary level so students and families can connect via video conferencing tools, 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.

2.   Educators will also use their time at their discretion (unless otherwise noted) for the following:

- Remote collaboration within their teams/grades/departments/mentors and protégés
- Preparation and professional development time
- Virtual Staff Meetings with Principals at scheduled times
- Professional development time for preparation regarding enrichment and remote learning opportunities.
- Remote participation in Special Education/504 meetings at scheduled times.
- Completing special education evaluation reports and other documents related to special education
- Communication with students and families.
- Read and respond to emails.
- As an opportunity to include paraprofessionals as part of the team.

3.   Families will continue to be directed by Administration to the online resources provided by the district.

4.   Educators may choose, but are not required, to add to the resources via Google Classroom/class website/social media account or other online platforms that the District currently or could be using. Any additional resources should focus on providing a continuity of learning, meaning that resources should focus on review and enrichment. Educators should be mindful of equity issues and ensuring that any learning options are available for all students.

5.   At the middle and high school level, the third and fourth quarters will be combined and teachers will be asked to record pass or pass/incomplete for grades during the remote learning period. If a student receives a pass/incomplete, they will be given opportunities to make up the learning. At the elementary level, teachers should continue with formative assessments and give feedback, where appropriate, during this time period, but report cards will not be issued.

6.   Employees may be expected to participate in online professional development during this period. Some of the professional development may include but is not limited to training of the various district technology learning tools. The district shall provide a menu of professional development options for employees to self-select and participate. In selecting PD options, the District will be mindful of length of programming and will work to provide options that Educators can participate in while still completing work per the attached guidelines. Educators may also substitute applicable professional development not on the list after approval from their Principal or supervisor.

7.   When speaking with families, educators should use available options to maintain the privacy of personal contact information. Should an educator have concerns about speaking with a family regarding a particular matter or issue or if the educator needs assistance with volume of inquires; the educator shall call or email your principal or director for further assistance.

The District understands that this is largely unchartered waters and that educators will have other responsibilities throughout the day. The expectations are for everyone to do their best to maintain communication and connection with our students until normal operations can resume.