



March 14, 2020

Dear Staff and Families,

I hope all of you are doing well during this challenging time. We are all in this together and learning from one another. As you are aware, many schools and districts have closed for extended periods of time due to the Coronavirus. I have hesitated in putting out a notice of any kind as I wanted to participate in the conference call yesterday morning with the Commissioner of Education and Commissioner of the Department of Public Health, and in the afternoon conference call with the Deputy Commissioner of Special Education to have a better understanding of the situation.

Here are a few things I have learned:

1. When school is closed for these circumstances, schools are encouraged to provide supplemental work, to not have a gap in student learning. However, this does NOT count as a school day.
2. Due to the importance of IEP meetings, they can continue via virtually. The notice must state that all parties agreed to a virtual meeting.
3. If the 180 school days go beyond June 30th, school districts are not required to make them up.
4. If the sending school district is closed but the collaborative remains open, districts should try to make an effort in still providing transportation. (This is different than snow days. Districts don't always provide transportation on snow days because of road safety concerns.)
5. Concerns were brought up around MCAS timelines. The Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) is going to continue providing updates on this issue. They are still working through this.
6. When students/staff are out of school we are asked to continue to respect their privacy. Only the required personnel should be made aware of the purpose of their absence.
7. The Governor has asked that we reduce any assemblies to less than 250 people and stop any school-related travel.
8. If a parent travels and comes home with symptoms, then the student must self-quarantine for 14 days.

Given all of the aspects around this virus and wanting to provide a safe learning and working environment for all, EDCO Collaborative had all Bedford employees work virtually on Friday to allow for a deep cleaning of the building. For this upcoming week, the Bedford

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building will be closed. Tenants of this building will make their own determination of whether to be in the building this week or not. There will be an update on the reopening of the EDCO Bedford building next week, after the Commissioner's conference.

The following is the impact of this decision:

1. The last day of school for Bedford School Programs has now been moved to June 29th.
2. Teachers and Program Directors will be asked to provide some activities for their students to provide enrichment learning opportunities, as appropriate.
3. The EDCO Program for the Deaf & Hard of Hearing in Newton will follow the expectations of Newton Public Schools.
4. The EDCO Youth Alternative program in Charlestown will follow the expectations of Boston Public Schools.
5. All Central Office staff are required to work virtually, along with Bedford Program Directors.
6. All staff meetings will occur virtually for this week.
7. Wrentham staff will be notified separately of the Executive Director's expectations.

Please also keep in mind that the purpose of this closure is to reduce exposure of this virus. Therefore, this school closure should not be considered as a "vacation" or a time to explore crowded spaces. We hope to continue providing you with updates on this issue. I wish all of you a healthy and safe week. Parents and staff, as always, if you have any further questions, please contact your program director for clarification.

In the coming days, I will be providing more updates as they develop. A copy of my letters and resource links will also be posted to www.edcollab.org/covid-19.

Sincerely,

Nadine Ekstrom, Ph. D.
Executive Director