

Orange East Supervisory Union

Serving the towns of Bradford, Corinth, Groton, Newbury, Ryegate,
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April 3, 2020

Dear Families,

First of all, thank you for your support. To put it mildly, these are challenging times. I am writing today to update you on our planning process for Continuation of Learning (COL), as well as other relevant updates.

Spring Sports: We anticipate the VPA making a final decision on Spring sports by April 30th. We will wait for further guidance from the VPA on this issue before taking steps.

April Break: We have been directed by the Secretary of Education to follow our school calendars. This means that April break will be taking place. The Agency will release further information on the rest of the school year by May 8th. Until we receive any other guidance, we have been directed to follow our approved calendars. Any planning for in-service days will be handled locally by your principal, as we do not have the same days in all schools. Plans are being developed locally to continue to feed students during the April break.

Items Left at School by Students: When the stay at home order is lifted by the Governor, your building leaders will come up with a process for students to access any items they have left at school and will work to create a pick-up system. Until the Governor's order is lifted, we are not allowing access to schools by students.

Technology Guidance: The technology team has been working hard to issues guidance and support to teachers around best practices with technology during this period of closure, in order to take the steps to keep students safe.

Continuation of Learning Plan: We are working through the current period of school closure from a "maintenance of learning" approach, as dictated by the Agency of Education. During this time, it is the goal of schools to maintain current learning, without the requirement to introduce new learning. This will continue through April 10th. On April 13th we will transition to "continuation of learning. Our staff have been working hard to meet these goals and plan for this transition.

We received a first draft of "guidance" from the AOE about what our continuation of learning plan needs to include; this was received via email on Saturday. On Sunday I met with a small group of determined superintendents from across the State to rewrite this draft to better represent our current reality and the pressures everyone is facing. We presented this draft to the Secretary on Monday evening. The suggestions were well received. Please note that we are required to submit a SU plan, not a school level plan for approval.

On Wednesday the Agency of Education released a revised COL Plan template to the field. We have been working to meet the demands of that plan. Our plan is due to the Agency next week.

To prepare for this transition, **we are asking teachers to complete a planning document and submit that document to their principals ahead of April 13th**. All teachers must complete this document and have it on file with their principal. We encourage teachers to share those plans with families once they are complete.

In communicating with teachers, I shared an analogy to frame our thinking about how to approach teaching and learning for the remainder of the year. We all know that it is sugaring season in Vermont. The process of making maple syrup involves taking all of the sap you collect from the trees and boiling it down to make syrup. My understanding is that it takes 40 gallons of sap to make one gallon of syrup. Through that process we distill the sap down to its essence, transforming it into syrup. Think about teaching and learning over the next 7-8 weeks in the same way—what is the syrup?

In a normal year, our schools would be overflowing with sap, and we would be emptying and filling buckets each and every day. I want us to spend this time focusing on the syrup. In other words, what are most essential 3-5 big ideas for our students to know between now and the end of the year in each content area? We can't recreate all that we do in our classrooms during this period, instead our approach needs to center on the most essential academic elements.

In closing, thank you for all that you do and for all that is being asked of you during this time. I have seen an incredible willingness to come together during this time. More information will be forthcoming from your schools and teachers as we transition into this new period. Please stay tuned to the OESU website for updates.

Sincerely,

Emilie Knisley
Superintendent of Schools