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Dear CTECS families -

I hope this weekly update finds you well as we wrap up week two of distance learning and head into a 3-day weekend!

First, as you may have already heard, Governor Lamont announced today that Connecticut schools will be closed until at least May 20, 2020. While it is disappointing that we will not be returning to the classroom soon, the decision is in the best interest of the health of our communities. I understand this news may be upsetting to some families and students, as the last month may have been filled with challenges, increased stress and anxiety. Please know we are here to support you and we want you to practice patience and kindness with yourself and others. We are in uncharted territory, but we will get through it together.

Thank you for those that submitted comments, concerns and suggestions to our [online feedback form](#) this past week. Overall, the feedback was very positive and we appreciate the many thoughtful suggestions for improvement which were shared. Administrators are reviewing your feedback so we can improve our Distance Learning program for everyone involved (students, parents, and teachers).

Cycle Rotation

One topic we heard a lot about in the past week from both staff and students is the academic and trade cycle rotation. In the spirit of keeping as flexible as possible in this unprecedented time, we are letting school buildings decide if they want to keep to a 2-day cycle or move to a 5-day cycle based on what best suits the needs of staff and students. You will be hearing from your Principal what schedule your school will follow.

Hands-on Learning

Several comments from parents and students also expressed concern over losing the hands-on component of our curriculum – it's our bread and butter, and what we do better than any other school system! While we must acknowledge that distance learning makes hands-on learning more difficult, the creative ways our teachers are rising to the occasion is remarkable. Here are some ways the issue is being addressed:

- Instead of physically working on a project, students have written assignments where they must articulate each step of a project or process in order to demonstrate proficiency.
- Many teachers are creating how-to videos and using them for class lessons. For example, teachers have filmed a water heater installation or video on proper equipment use.
- Many vendors are donating online seats to their nationwide curriculum, which include virtual simulations and videos of the work students would normally be doing in shop. For example, an auto student can adjust the dial on a meter using a virtual reality simulation.

- It's also good for you to know that our trade curriculum is built in sequential steps, so although students are losing some hands-on components now, most will be able to pick up where they left off when we return to school.

We know it is not a perfect or ideal system, but we will continue to improve over the coming weeks. I encourage you to discuss your concerns with your teacher or principal if needed.

Grading and Assessments

Over the coming week we will be tackling the issue of grading and assessments. We will have more information for you soon, and want to stress that we do not want you to worry about it too much. We are working on developing fair and equitable grading parameters that make sense given the current situation.

Graduations and Graduation Requirements

It is still too early to decide on graduation plans. However, you should know that we will move heaven and earth in order to hold graduation ceremonies, as long as the safety and health of our students, staff and families is not compromised. Graduation is the most important function of our school system – the culmination of staff and student hard work. We don't know what it will look like yet, but we are exploring various options.

It's also important for you to know that no student should be prevented from graduating because of hardships brought on by the coronavirus. However, they must continue to give their best effort in participating in distance learning and completing their assignments. Guidance on graduation requirements will be coming soon.

SNAP benefits

The Families First Coronavirus Response Act allows several flexibilities for the National School Lunch program (NSLP) and the students that participate in the NSLP. One of these flexibilities is possible additional [Electronic Benefit Transfer \(EBT\) benefits through the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program \(SNAP\)](#). [Learn more.](#)

SAT and AP exams

The College Board has canceled SAT School Day, the May 2, 2020 SAT, and SAT Subject Test administration. The June 6, 2020 SAT and SAT Subject Test administration is not canceled yet. As a means to ensure timely and accurate updates, please visit the [College Board website](#).

Traditional face-to-face AP exam administration will not take place this year. Students will take a 45 minute online free-response exam at home. Learn more and find the latest updates at the [College Board AP website for students](#).

Take care of yourself and your families.

Jeffrey Wihbey, Superintendent