



Southbridge Public Schools

132 Torrey Road, Southbridge MA 01550

Telephone: (508) 764-5450

March 20, 2020

Dear Families,

I hope you are staying safe and healthy. I am writing to update you on our efforts to address the immediate needs of our students and families during the Covid-19 pandemic. This letter will outline our efforts to provide meals to students and to develop resources to help engage students in academic activities during the school shut down.

Please note the academic materials are not designed to replace classroom instruction but rather are created to provide children with meaningful academic activities. Students who are unable to access electronic materials or do not have the ability to complete activities will not be penalized. The school district is waiting for specific direction from the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education in regard to the impact of the shut down on the academic year including mandated state testing, the closing of grades, among many other important matters. We will pass along this information as we receive it.

This week, we established a system to distribute student meals and we began to determine how the closure will impact teaching and learning. There are two pages on our district website dedicated to updates and information about Covid-19 and the school closure. One page is in English and one is in Spanish. Thank you for your patience as we get this material posted for all families. A page dedicated to educational resources is now available. Check back soon for updates and additions to the educational resources page.

It remains important to note that our district website, www.SouthbridgePublic.org, emails from district staff, and automated calls are the source of accurate information. I remain committed to communicating with you through these platforms on a regular basis.

I would like to again reassure you of several ways that we, the Southbridge Public Schools, will continue to serve students over the next few weeks. Listed below are some of the ways that we are supporting students and families at this time.

Meals for Students

Southbridge Public Schools began serving meals to our students in the community on Wednesday, March 18. On Wednesday, we served 223 students, on Thursday, we served 288 students, and on Friday we served 396 students. We will continue to serve meals for students on a regular basis in the next few weeks. We strongly encourage families to take advantage of this meal program.

Meals are available Monday through Friday, from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. Families can bring their students to any of the meal sites, which are at Eastford Road School, West Street School, Charlton Street School, and 25 Cole Avenue ("the old high school"). Residents of Brookside Terrace will have meals available to them within the complex.

Breakfast and lunch are packaged together and served at one time at these locations. Meals are available for pick up only and must be taken home to eat. Students receive lunch for that day and breakfast for the next morning during a single pick up. A limited number of paper-based educational packets will be available at meal sites for families who lack dependable internet access.

Safety procedures will be in place to limit the gathering of individuals at sites where student meals will be distributed. Each meal site will have a dedicated location where meals will be made available. We will ask that when picking up meals individuals maintain approximately 6 feet distance from others and follow the directions of individuals providing the meals.

School buildings will not be open or accessible during the mandatory closure. You can call each school for information if needed. Please be patient with the return of calls, as we are receiving a high volume of calls at this time.

Teaching and Learning During the Closure

Resources to support student learning are now available on a dedicated page of our website. On this page, you will find instructions on how to log in to learning platforms such as Clever, iReady, and Wonders. You will also find free educational resources, how to contact teachers, and other valuable information. Please continue to check back as this page is updated in the upcoming days.

Beginning Monday, March 23, we will provide paper-based educational packets at meal sites for families that do not have dependable internet access. Packets for each grade level will be available at every meal site. You do not have to go to a particular school to get material for a specific grade or class. These materials will help to sustain learning and educational development during the closure.

We would like to assure families that these learning materials are provided to support your child's education. We encourage you to take advantage of these resources and to use them to support continued learning. While these online and paper-based resources are not intended to replicate the experience of school, you may want to use them to maintain routines for your children and to maintain learning. This work is not graded.

Medications at School

Thursday was the last day when nurses were available to return medications to parents and students. If you were unable to pick up your student's medication at the times provided this week, the medication will be stored by the school nurses. If you have any concerns about this or would like to talk to a nurse, please contact the individual school by phone. Please be patient with the return of calls, as we are receiving a high volume of calls at this time.

Preventive Measures

Preventive measures, such as washing your hands, remain the best line of defense for individuals and communities. If you are not able to wash your hands, use hand sanitizer. Cover any cough or sneeze with a tissue or your sleeve (not your hands), stay away from people who are sick, and stay home if you are sick.

Our official communications channels are your best source of information. These include the district website, automated phone calls, and emails received from school and district leadership.

For more information on the coronavirus, please see the attached fact sheet from the Massachusetts Department of Public Health both [in English](#) and [in Spanish](#).

The State of Massachusetts also provides detailed information about the current outbreak of Covid-19, or the coronavirus on the Mass.gov website ([mass.gov](#))

You can also get updates and information about Covid-19 from the Centers for Disease Control website ([CDC.gov](#)).

Regards,

Jeffrey A. Villar, Ph.D.
Receiver/Superintendent
Southbridge Public School