

To: All Certified Staff
From: Nathan Quesnel, Superintendent
Re: Distance Learning Plan Overview and Expectations
Date: March 20, 2020

Overview

During this unprecedented time, we appreciate everyone's patience, cooperation, dedication, and eagerness to assist students and families. The outpouring of support and volunteerism has been inspirational but not unexpected from our East Hartford Public Schools (EHPS) learning team. To begin this message, I first want to thank the leadership of the East Hartford Education Association (EHEA) for working collaboratively to negotiate a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) that codifies how learning will be delivered in East Hartford during this time of closure. While our current date of return to school is officially April 1, 2020, we are actively preparing for a significantly longer period of shut down. Based on guidance provided by the Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE), we have received authority to maintain our last day of school as June 12, 2020 in exchange for agreeing to implement a Distance Learning Plan (DLP). Before proceeding any further, we want to acknowledge that this is new, uncharted, and challenging work for all of us. In the spirit of a district that believes *Solutions Matter*, we are committed to working with you, our dedicated teacher team, to doing everything within our power to provide a *high-quality learning experience for every child, every day*. To that end, we have developed the following guidance which aligns to the newly negotiated EHEA MOU to provide clarity of process and expectations for the immediate future. While we understand this memo is extensive and comprehensive, we appreciate your careful attention as we begin this journey together.

In alignment with our core belief that Expectations Matter, EHPS has developed a plan to ensure students are provided an opportunity to continue to learn in the event of an extended school closure as a result of COVID-19. It is the goal of this plan to prepare all students through the use of multiple formats of outreach including digital platforms, web-based resources, and more traditional materials for students in younger grades. This is a new experience for students, families, teachers, and administrators. As we always do in East Hartford, we will learn from you, make adjustments as necessary, and enhance the process of distance learning as we evolve. As a district, we recognize the challenges that distance learning presents for our community, but believe that together we can make a difference in a time when a difference needs to be made. To that end, we appreciate your flexibility, creativity and effort in advance.

To promote consistency across the district as well as have a streamlined and logical approach to our DLP, we have set the following expectations for families, students, and certified staff. Please note, this is not an exhaustive document, and is subject to evolve to best address the changing context of our current status.

Logistics/Expectations

- The launch date for the district's DLP is March 20, 2020 with the notification of the EHEA negotiated MOU and the information communicated via this message. Between March 23, 2020 - March 27, 2020, staff will receive significant communication from school and district administration regarding resources, training on appropriate technology, individual/department/school meetings and general messaging.

- The launch date for students to participate in the District's DLP is March 30, 2020. Content for the beginning phases of learning through April 9, 2020 is currently being developed by district staff (Principals, Department Supervisors, Instructional Specialists) to provide teachers with adequate time to adjust to this new structure. Content following April Break (starting April 20) will be designed by teachers in coordination with administration.
- Staff are expected to work during normal contractual hours to fulfill the obligations of the DLP. In this arrangement, staff are expected to work from home and to practice social distancing. All buildings will continue to be closed to staff. In the event a staff member requires absence from work, they shall report their absence through normal means.
- Staff are expected to use personal phones to implement the communication plan in the DLP. Staff are encouraged to use *67 to block personal numbers to maintain privacy.
- Staff are expected to use personal computers/devices to implement the DLP. In regards to communication, all certified staff are expected to check email frequently throughout the day. Any staff member in need of a laptop should send an email to techsupport@easthartford.org. For staff who do not have connectivity at home, internet providers may be offering free home internet that can be accessed as needed. In addition, technology support can be accessed by all staff using the same email address above.
- Staff are expected to utilize PowerSchool to access student/family contact information. PowerSchool can be accessed using the QuickLinks tab on the www.easthartford.org main page.
- All staff including Specials, World Language, ESL, Bilingual, SPED, Fine and Performing Arts, Physical Education and Health, Library Media Services, Career and Technical Education, School Counselor, and Related Service Staff, etc. are expected to participate in the DLP.
- EHPS will be closed for Good Friday (April 10, 2020) as well as for the April Break (April 13-17, 2020). The DLP will not be in session during this time.
- If the district remains closed through the remainder of the 2019-2020 school year, staff are expected to work with administration in the identification of summer school participants and the development of 2020-2021 class lists.

Key Dates for DLP: March 23-27, 2020-Staff Preparation

- Staff are expected to use this time to arrange personal and family schedules in preparation for DLP instruction starting on March 30, 2020. While it is fully understood that DLP instruction will necessarily intermingle with familial and life activities, it is expected that staff will make appropriate efforts to arrange their home schedule to accommodate work responsibilities. In these new working conditions, staff should designate an appropriate location in their home where phone calls/ video chats can be conducted without interference.
- Staff are expected to carefully monitor school and district communications regarding the release of the DLP content and to participate in any virtual meetings/ training schedule at this time. These trainings will be scheduled by administration and will occur during contractual work hours. Training sessions are currently under development but will focus on how to use online platforms for content delivery including Google Classroom, DOJO, Remind, MyAPClassroom as well as how to participate in teleconferences such as Google Meet/Hangouts.

Key Dates for DLP: March 30, 2020-Student Engagement

- Students and families will be able to access the EHPS DLP beginning on Monday, March 30th hosted on the district website <http://www.easthartford.org>. The EHPS DLP will be organized by grade level and include content developed by district and school administration for the first two weeks of instruction through April 9, 2020. As such, teachers are not expected to develop content during this

period as we transition into this new learning mode. In the initial launch of the DLP, directions will be provided regarding student schedules, structures for learning, and expectations for student/family communication.

- Staff will be expected to make contact with students and begin to strengthen relationships in this new structure of teaching.
- Staff will set office hours as well as participate in virtual Instructional Data Team (IDT) and department supervised school meetings.
- Staff will use this initial time period, in collaboration with district administration, to begin the process of developing instructional content that will be delivered on and after April 20, 2020.
- Student support staff (Guidance Counselors, Social Workers, School Psychologists) are expected to communicate with all families and support student needs. As a part of this work, these staff are expected to identify students who do not have access to technology at home and may require an alternative delivery system. This alternative system will be developed with school and district leaders. In addition, these staff members are expected to develop systems for addressing students who do not participate for a variety of reasons. Contact with students should be logged into Log Entries as a component of PowerSchool.
- Special Education, Related Service, EL and Bi-Lingual staff are expected to review the learning needs of students on their caseloads and adjust instruction as able and appropriate. These staff should communicate with all students and families on their caseloads and explain this new approach to learning, including differences in current service delivery. More information will be shared by the Special Education Supervisors regarding the specifics of these responsibilities.

Key Dates for DLP: April 20, 2020-Educator-Developed Content

- Following April Break, the DLP will transition to provide more educator developed content in coordination with district and school staff. The purpose behind this shift is to provide greater levels of educator autonomy and improve differentiation, while maintaining a commitment to equity and consistency. The district will publish single grade level content materials that will be used across district schools with the exception of specialized schools. Thus, the key role of the educator in this structure centers on support of grade level planning, instructional communication with students, and individual modification of content based on student needs. This organizational structure responds to the challenge of distance learning and the barriers that exist within our community. In all planning, communication and assessment, our goal is to engage our students in a process that admittedly may be difficult. Based on this understanding, special attention will be paid to avoid overburdening or under-burdening students with content/lessons/activities.
- Elementary (PreK-5) Content Development Structure
 - Grade level teachers at each school will be divided among 3 content areas (Literacy, Mathematics, and Science) for planning and content development purposes. Based on this identification, the district will form cross-school grade level teams to meet virtually with District Instructional Specialists, and assigned Principals/Coaches to develop a unified grade level plan for content across all 8 district schools. All content for the following week should be finalized by 9am Thursday and sent to the Elementary Assistant Superintendent for approval. Finalized grade level DLPs will be sent by 12pm on Thursday to the Performance Office and the IT Web Team to post on <http://www.easthartford.org> or provide copies as needed.
 - Specials (Art, Music, Physical Education/Health, Technology) teachers will meet virtually with Department Supervisors to develop consistent district grade level content. All content for the following week should be finalized by 9am Thursday and sent to the Elementary Assistant

Superintendent for approval. Finalized grade level DLPs will be sent by 12pm on Thursday to the Performance Office and the IT Web Team to post on <http://www.easthartford.org> or provide copies as needed.

- Middle School Content Development Structure
 - Subject grade level teachers including (Art, Music, Physical Education/Health, Technology and World Language) from East Hartford Middle School (EHMS) and Sunset Ridge (SR) will meet virtually 2X/week with Department Supervisors for planning and weekly content development (lessons/assignments/tasks). Department Supervisors will submit weekly content plans by grade level to the Deputy Superintendent for 12pm on Friday. Finalized grade level DLPs will be posted by the Performance Office and the IT Web Team at <http://www.easthartford.org>.
- High School Content Development Structure
 - Grade 9 subject teachers from East Hartford High School (EHHS) will meet virtually 2X/week with Department Supervisors for planning and weekly content development (lessons/assignments/tasks). Department Supervisors will submit weekly content plans by grade level to the Deputy Superintendent for 12pm on Friday. Finalized grade level DLPs will be posted by the Performance Office and the IT Web Team at <http://www.easthartford.org>.
 - Grade 10-12 and Team Aspire teachers from East Hartford High School (EHHS) will meet with Department Supervisors for planning and weekly content development (lessons/assignments/tasks). Department Supervisors will submit weekly content plans to the Deputy Superintendent for 12pm on Friday. Finalized content area DLPs will be posted by the Performance Office and the IT Web Team at <http://www.easthartford.org>.
 - Elective teachers (Art, Music, Physical Education/Health, Career Technology Education, World Language) from East Hartford High School will meet virtually 2X/week with Department Supervisors for planning and weekly content development (lessons/assignments/tasks). Department Supervisors will submit weekly content plans to the Deputy Superintendent for 12pm on Friday. Finalized grade level DLPs will be posted by the Performance Office and the IT Web Team at <http://www.easthartford.org>.
- Woodland, Synergy and CIBA Content Development Structure
 - The Principal will work with teachers for planning and content development purposes. Teachers at these schools will utilize district DLP resources as applicable to curriculum. All content/lesson plans will be sent to the school principal for approval. As appropriate, finalized grade level/content area DLPs will be sent by 12pm on Friday to the Performance Office to post on <http://www.easthartford.org>.

Assessment/Grading/Attendance

- State/High Stakes Assessments: On 3/18/2020, Governor Lamont and the CSDE sought a waiver from the Federal Government suspending state testing for Spring 2020. That decision is pending. In addition, the College Board is currently finalizing AP Exam options that will allow students to test at home, depending on the situation in May.
- Progress Monitoring/Grades: Assessment of student progress on DLPs will be conducted via communication between the educator, student and family. As future resources and guidance develop, more information will be disseminated. While technology resources provide the opportunity to assess some students, particularly those at the secondary level on content, staff are encouraged to use conversations with students as the main sources for evaluation of effort, understanding and

completion. Students will still receive grades as a part of the DLP. At this time, this guidance is left intentionally ambiguous.

- Attendance: Staff are expected to monitor student attendance through participation in DLP. Indications of participation may include phone conversations or other electronic interaction with students. For students not participating in the DLP, staff are expected to first contact parents/families of the students as well as alert members of the support team including the administration so a support plan can be developed. It is not expected to take attendance in PowerSchool as a part of the DLP.

Communication

- Communication between educators, administration, families, and students is a critical function of the DLP. Recognizing the recommendations made by the Center for Disease Control (CDC), this communication plan utilizes virtual meetings, conference calls, and a myriad of software platforms such as Google Meet/Hangouts, Zoom, Facetime, Slack, and WhatsApp. While these virtual conversations leave much to be desired in terms of human contact, we are committed to doing our best to make sure that at EHPS, Relationships Matter. In this time of concern and uncertainty, how we communicate the DLP experience will set the stage for the efficacy of the program. Please remain positive and open-minded about this new adventure. We are all in this together and will continue to learn as a team.
- Educator to Educator and Educator to Administrator Communication
 - All staff are expected to participate in virtual staff meetings or conference calls as scheduled by school administration and/or department supervisors. These meetings will be scheduled by administration during contractual work hours. Teachers will receive at a 12-hour notice before a meeting that is not a regular/standing meeting (e.g. department, faculty).
 - All certified staff are expected to communicate regularly on an as needed basis with colleagues across grade levels, within IDTs, with Support Staff including Special Education teachers, Related Service Staff, English Learner (EL) staff to coordinate DLPs.
- Student/Family Communication
 - All staff are expected to communicate with families and students on class lists or caseloads on a frequent basis. This communication should include a blend of emails, phone calls or other online communication platforms. In addition to individualized communications, staff are expected to keep “office hours” within routine blocks of time for students and families to use to contact them directly. Office hours must be published by teachers and shared in advance with administration on a weekly basis.
 - As able, the district will provide information (Spanish and English) to families regarding how to access online platforms.

Special Populations Expectations

- Special Education (SPED): Planning and Placement Team Meetings (PPT)/504 Meetings: PPT/504 meetings will be suspended throughout closure. Upon return to “live” schooling, all PPT/504 meetings will commence immediately to determine appropriate services and evaluate the loss of educational benefit if any. SPED teachers and Related Service staff are expected to work with regular education colleagues to provide appropriate services as able. In addition, SPED teachers and Related Service staff are expected to participate in communication plans. If there are any questions on how to meet student needs, please contact the SPED teacher directly for assistance or reach out to your SPED Supervisor.

- Self-Contained Classrooms: SPED teachers are responsible for developing the content that will be delivered to their students. SPED Supervisors responsible for these programs will approve these plans.
- English Learners (EL)/ Bilingual: Teachers of ELs not on a sheltered team should provide resources for ELs (in collaboration with EL teachers). Additional resources will also be shared for ELs on the district website.
 - Elementary EL and Bilingual staff will develop content/lesson plans/assignments for new arrivals in K-5 and support grade level teams in modifying assignments for English Learners. They will coordinate student support and parent communication with Bilingual Tutors and the appropriate grade level team.
 - Secondary EL and Bilingual staff will develop content/lesson plans/assignments for their assigned courses and will coordinate student support and parent communication with Bilingual Tutors and the appropriate grade level team.

Questions or Concerns:

- Please do not hesitate to reach out to your Principal or Department Supervisor with any questions or concerns you may have along the way. Our entire administrative team is learning alongside each of you and your feedback, input, and partnership is incredibly appreciated.