



## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Friday, March 27, 2020

- Ayer-Shirley Regional School District
- Billerica Public Schools
- Chelmsford Public Schools
- CREST Collaborative
- Dracut Public Schools
- Greater Lowell Technical High School
- Groton-Dunstable Regional School District
- Haverhill Public Schools
- Lawrence Public Schools
- Littleton Public Schools
- Methuen Public Schools
- Nashoba Valley Technical High School
- North Andover Public Schools
- North Middlesex Regional School District
- North Reading Public Schools
- Reading Public Schools
- SEEM Collaborative
- Shawsheen Technical High School
- Stoneham Public Schools
- Tewksbury Public Schools
- Tyngsborough Public Schools
- Valley Collaborative
- Wakefield Public Schools
- Westford Public Schools
- Whittier Regional Vocational Technical H.S.
- Wilmington Public Schools
- Woburn Public Schools

As the superintendents of schools representing the Merrimack Valley Superintendents Association, we first wish to thank all of the families in our districts for their patience and flexibility throughout this ever-evolving situation. As Governor Baker has extended school closures through May 4<sup>th</sup>, it is incumbent upon us to develop and express a more long-term vision of what education looks like for our students at this time. Utilizing the [Remote Learning Recommendations During COVID-19 School Closures](#) document provided by the Commissioner of Education, our districts will collaborate over the next several days to create an educational experience to best meet the needs of all learners. Our shared belief is that, in future years when children reflect on this time in their lives, what they will remember most are the positive connections they felt at an uncertain time.

School is a special place - a sacred place. All of our communities stress that learning has its foundation in the relationships developed between learners and teachers, whether adults or children. There is no way to replicate this environment in a digital format in the middle of a pandemic over a week/month or two. We are deeply concerned about the physical and emotional health of everyone in our school communities. As such, we commit to planning and supporting learning that lessens stress and anxiety.

Part of this commitment means developing the skills and tools necessary to evolve and prioritize these relationships over the coming months. We are asking all of our educators to check in with their students. Many are already going far beyond connecting. They are doing incredible work untethered by current educational policy to ensure that students feel safe and remain connected to their learning. As we move forward, we must continue to prioritize these relationships as districts make decisions about how to build structures to support these expectations.

We recognize that there are countless challenges for identified learners who need specialized instruction in content delivery and know that we will not be able to solve all of these challenges in the short term. As such, we will continue to focus on safety and connection while providing students with learning opportunities. One of our biggest challenges in this effort is meeting the needs of our preschool and elementary students. The plan for these age groups is to focus on process skills, like observation and description and foundational skills, like reading, writing and mathematics. These skills are an important objective of our content delivery with classroom instruction when school is in session. Some of our secondary curricular structure is already in place through various learning management systems. Middle school and high school teachers will use familiar tools to encourage critical and creative thinking skills.

Our school communities will continue to make connections, value relationships, develop learning skills, understand service and community, maintain health and wellbeing, and focus on a greater good. In remaining focused on the social and emotional needs of our students and offering learning experiences that support those needs, we believe that our students, your children, will be well served during this school closing.