April 8, 2020

Dear Parents/Caregivers:

We are living through unprecedented times with a lot of information, fact and fiction, bombarding us in the media and on social virtual sites. The unknown health concerns and indefinite closures are very scary and worrisome. With all this information and fears, it is difficult to remember that our first priority is family. Your children, our students, are looking to us for direction and guidance. They want some “normal” in their daily life. There are many things that we cannot control. However, we can control education and continue the student – teacher classroom check-ins. Continuing education for students and adults can be calming by redirecting attention for a few hours of each day.

Governor Wolf has directed schools to be closed until further notice. Our district began online enrichment and review on Monday, March 30. Teachers have been in contact with you and your children. We have distributed computers, so every student has access to their teacher. Your student(s) should have been online several times over the past week with their teachers, having general discussions and reviewing material from previous classes. If they have not been online, please have them online within the next few days. We are depending on you to assist us in having students connect with teachers. You should have received emails from teachers and principals. If you have not heard from anyone, please call the district office (717-684-2283) and leave a message with your name, your child’s name, and grade. We will contact you.

At this time, we are unsure when we will return to the school buildings. Therefore, beginning, Monday, April 13, 2020, we will be shifting our education from review to new material or “planned instruction”. Columbia’s “continuity of education” plan can be found on our website this is our plan to continue education during this closure. Teachers will be introducing new content to students online, the same as if they were in the buildings. This may be in a different format than classroom, however students are responsible for learning this new content.

Beginning Monday, April 13, 2020 we will be taking ATTENDANCE and teachers will be GRADING work. Attendance and grading will be reviewed by your students’ teacher in their class meetings and discussions. Remember, the grading and attendance is used by our educators to determine each students’ understanding of the material. Please do not complete the assignments for your student. The grade is not as important at this time as the knowledge and understanding of the material. Included with this letter are Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ’s) to assist you while working with your student or needing assistance.

Changes to the calendar have been made. Friday, April 10, 2020, is a holiday, District and online instruction are CLOSED. There are no other holidays or closed days in April. Every day will be a student and teacher attendance day. The District has POSTPONED all activities, except PIAA sanctioned events through May 31, 2020. District activities (Spring Musical, May Day, banquets, Senior Recognition, Baccalaureate, and Commencement) have NOT been
cancelled. Activities continue to be planned, without a specific date. When the Governor lifts restrictions, we will begin to plan with specific dates.

Columbia students, parents, caregivers, and community members have TIDE PRIDE and are very resilient. Our students have been very engaged in the learning process during the past week, and we appreciate your commitment to education and the district. Our teachers and administrators will continue to work with students and are always available for questions and concerns. Together, we are doing something that has never been done before in Columbia education. We will have bumps and hiccups as we move forward. However, we will do everything to have a positive learning environment for students. We need your positive assistance in making this a valuable experience for every student in Columbia. This happens when every student is involved every day, and parents/caregivers are working with teachers and administrators in a positive manner.

We are in this together, and I know that at the end, Columbia students, community, and education team will be stronger. As a united team, we want the best for our students. This will take a united effort for all of us. We will continue to post updates on our website for each building and for the district. I will continue to send update letters to your email. Timely alerts will be sent by text and phone.

This is a very difficult year for you, your family, your community, and your school district. I am proud to be part of the Columbia Borough School District community and would not want to be anywhere else. TIDE PRIDE will make a difference! Thank you for your continued support of our students, teachers, and administrators. Please continue to stay safe!

Sincerely,

Thomas Strickler
Superintendent
Columbia Borough School District  
Continuity of Education

Frequently Asked Questions

Are the Online Platforms being used safe?

Columbia Borough School District believes strongly in the educational value of students having face-to-face interaction with their teachers and their classmates. In light of the necessary transition to an online learning environment, video conferencing platforms such as Zoom, SeeSaw, and Google Meet have become vital tools within our learning community.

The prevalence of these tools across all areas of life in recent weeks has resulted in increased media attention, especially when user errors result in negative experiences. Upon closer inspection, these incidents have all been the result of improper usage, rather than inherent deficiencies with the software.

Please be assured that before deploying these tools, CBSD has consulted with legal professionals, carefully tested the software, and provided guidance and training to all staff. Additionally, default settings have been applied whenever possible to help meetings remain private and secure for all involved. We are confident in our ability to deliver a safe & positive educational experience to all our students using these tools. If you have any further questions about these tools please contact your child’s principal.

When are CBSD Teachers available?

Teachers will be available during school hours – Monday to Thursday 8 am to 3:30 pm, Friday 8 am to 2:30 pm

What if I need to talk with my counselor?

Counselors and other staff members are available to assist students with individual academic planning and social-emotional support. Hours: Monday to Thursday 8 am to 3:30 pm, Friday 8 am to 2:30 pm. Contact information:

Molly Jones – Secondary Counselor mjones@columbiabsd.org
Christopher Mundy – MS & Secondary Counselor cmundy@columbiabsd.org
Erica Ware – Middle School Counselor eware@columbiabsd.org
Justin Houghton – K-4 Counselor jhoughton@columbiabsd.org
Kelly Smith – Home School Visitor ksmith@columbiabsd.org

What should students expect daily, in terms of instruction?

Each grade and subject area will be a little different. Teachers will be holding virtual classrooms for learning and will be posting assignments. Students are expected to attend Online classrooms and do complete the assignments and activities. Students will be informed in advance of the time and dates for online classes and assignment due dates.
How many hours per week should student be Online?

The District recommends the following Guidelines:
Kindergarten to 2nd grade – Approximately 4 hours per week
3rd & 4th grades – Approximately 6 hours per week
5th to 12th grades – 12 – 16 hours per week

We recommend breaks each day with physical exercise (walking, biking, running, etc) and time away from all screens (computer, phone, television, games)

When is end of 3rd marking period and beginning of 4th marking period?

The 3rd marking period ended March 13th. All assignments are due to teachers by April 9. Grades will be available April 17th online in PowerSchool. The 4th marking period begins April 13th.

How will attendance and grading work?

Attendance will be done by each teacher based on Online attendance and assignment completion. Assigned work will be graded by teachers.

What if I cannot meet during the scheduled office hours?

If parents/students are not able to attend office hours, teachers will try their best to accommodate student needs.

Will Special Education teachers and services be available?

Our goal is to provide appropriate and reasonable instruction through a good faith effort to make things as equitable as possible for all of our students.
- Special education teachers will deliver core instruction
- Special education teachers will provide activities for each individual based on goals in a student’s IEP and the online limitations
- Special education case managers will work closely with students and parents on components of the student’s IEP