



April 15, 2020

Dear Community, Families, Staff and Students,

First, and foremost I hope this finds you healthy as we continue to deal with this pandemic. Please take a look at this [video update](#). We live in a beautiful place and the weather has been amazing. Hopefully you have found some solace during this stressful and anxious time. Each of us are dealing with the pressure in very personal ways. We have counselors who are able to help in addition to the Island County Mental Health Department. Employees also have an employee assistance program. There are options for support and if you are looking for support and are unable to find it please contact me and I can help direct you to support services.

As you know, traditional, face to face school will not resume this year. We are now providing emergency remote instruction. I want to provide some perspective on this as I have heard from parents about what is happening at home. Some parents are frustrated because there is too much work being expected. For some, this work involves a great deal of parental oversight because students may be young, or struggling with the technology or other learning issues. Some families have limited space and are sharing a single table. There is distraction and annoyance. Some parents feel their teachers are not doing enough and what they do seems chaotic and unplanned. Some families struggle with the demands being placed on their wifi and the applications in general. It is terribly frustrating to be in a Zoom meeting that glitches or won't even connect from the start. How does a family, let alone the world, manage multiple Zoom meetings in a single hour, in one house? We are overwhelmed, worried, stressed, and tired.

Our teachers, staff and students learn best in a face to face, hands on, social and personal school setting. We have been using that model in our public schools for a long time. All of our students, especially our young children, need guidance, attention, and compassion from teachers who develop personal relationships over time. Even our most capable 12th grade students have been working primarily with teachers in classrooms over their whole school career.

We received an [80 page document from OSPI](#) that gives districts guidance on providing instruction in this new situation. The emphasis from OSPI is that we maintain connection with students and families, we work with each other with grace and compassion, and we do so with common sense. It is also important that we keep communicating. They loosely defined a sample for an instructional schedule at each level K-12. [Our district wide schedule is posted online](#)

[linked here](#). Our goals in South Whidbey based upon this guidance are mainly two-fold. We want to maintain contact with all students and families and offer as much support as we are able; and, we will provide emergency remote instruction in as many modes as possible based upon student need, to the best of our ability. [See notes from a teacher's meeting linked here](#).

South Whidbey School District supports OSPI's suggested minimum daily learning times for students:

- PreK: 5–10-minute increments, a total of 30 minutes
- K–1: 5–10-minute time spans, a total of 45 minutes
- 2–3: 10–15-minute time spans, a total of 60 minutes
- 4–5: 20-minute time spans, a total of 90 minutes
- 6–8: 20 minutes for each class (2.5 hours maximum per day)
- 9–12: 30 minutes for each class (3 hours maximum per day)
- All: After each class, strongly recommend students get up to move

South Whidbey teachers are here to provide and support parents and students with their educational plans. Please reach out to your teachers if they have not connected with you and provided an educational plan. This plan will evolve weekly as this new normal sets in. One week there may not be enough work. The next week, there may be too much. Provide your teachers with feedback so that they know where each student stands and what help students may need to get through it. As we expect our teachers to communicate with their students and parents, we need our parents and students to communicate with their teachers.

Our seniors are on our minds. We are working to provide them happy and memorable senior activities. Leadership students and class parents are working with teachers and administrators to develop meaningful celebrations to mark this rite of passage for seniors. It will be special, and memorable and will mark the hard work they have put into graduating from high school. The celebrations may vary from tradition. However, they will be special and important for our 2020 graduates.

Your patience and dedication to learning is commended. As we remain home to flatten the curve, at South Whidbey, our learning curve is exponential. Teachers will provide instruction. Students must participate in daily learning. Parents should support their students and help communicate with their teachers. No one is expected to be perfect. We need to find our strength, stamina and compassion to empower each other. Hang in there. In the remaining 47 days of school, we WILL learn and we WILL become stronger. We are in this together.

Sincerely,

[Dr. Jo Moccia](#)  
[Superintendent](#)  
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