



March 19, 2020

Dear Excel Families,

I'm writing with an update as to Excel's plans for an extended period of school closure, and how we will try to best support your family. I also want to send a deep and sincere thank you for your patience, hard work and flexibility during this time of uncertainty.

We have decided to align our closure with BPS and will be closed until April 27th. Boston Public Schools (BPS) announced last week that they will close all schools until Monday, April 27th, and Chelsea Public Schools (CPS) decided to close indefinitely. Both of these decisions are part of a larger community effort to reduce the spread of COVID-19, and we feel strongly that our schools should also be part of this larger effort. Should the situation with Coronavirus improve on a faster timeline than expected, we will look into opening schools before April 27th if that is what is best for our school communities. If that happens, we will provide at least a week's notice before re-opening. Similarly, we will also be in touch if it looks like closure will be required past April 27th.

As we think about learning, it is important to note that learning in schools includes academic and social and emotional experiences, all of which are challenging to replicate without face-to-face interaction. Our dedicated staff have been working hard to prepare appropriate enrichment activities to help students remain engaged while school is not in session. One of the key ways we are doing this is expanding our ability to encourage student learning online.

FOR MIDDLE SCHOOL STUDENTS

Starting the week of March 30th, we will offer online learning resources to all students and families - so far, this has only been available to our High School students, who already have been provided their own Chromebooks. **Starting tomorrow, any Excel Academy middle school student may pick up a Chromebook at our two distribution sites and use it at home until school re-opens (details below).**

On March 30th, we will move to a virtual learning schedule that includes Google Classroom assignments and links to practice materials. Students will receive a weekly virtual learning schedule via Google Classroom that includes daily 3-4 assignments, as well as online links to optional content practice and links to practice optional daily mindfulness moments. The expectation is that students complete the 3-4 total daily Google Classroom assignments posted by their teachers. Teachers and advisors will provide feedback to students via Google Classroom on the work submitted and will connect with students weekly to check in on their progress. Additionally, all teachers are available between 12:00-2:00pm daily



if students would like to reach out with any questions or for support. School teams will be in touch soon with additional details about the remote learning assignments that start on March 30th. In the meantime, please encourage your child to continue completing assignments in the paper-based packet that was sent home last week.

Excel will loan Chromebooks to students who need them for the duration of the closure. Because our goal is to maximize student access to learning during this time, we do not recommend that students share computers at home. If you have one device at home for multiple students, we encourage you to pick up an additional Chromebook to ensure your children have adequate access to online learning.

If your child would like to have a Chromebook at home to complete assignments, you can pick one up starting tomorrow (Friday, March 20th) between 11:00AM to 1:00PM - the same hours that meals are being provided. Don't worry if you can't make it tomorrow - we will have them available from 11:00AM to 1:00PM on weekdays going forward.

You may pick up a Chromebook (and a grab-and-go package with breakfast and lunch!) at the site that is most convenient for you:

- Excel Academy - Chelsea, 180 2nd Street, Chelsea
- Excel Academy Charter High School, 401 Bremen Street, East Boston

We will not be distributing Chromebooks from our Orient Heights or East Boston (Moore Street) campuses.

FOR HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS

High School students have been accessing learning through Google Classroom this past week, and they will continue to do so. If students are having difficulty accessing material in Google Classroom, they should reach out to their advisor.

FOR ALL STUDENTS

A key aspect of remote learning is access to the internet. We encourage families who need support with internet access to consider applying for **Comcast's Internet Essentials program, which is currently offering two free months of internet access** (www.internetessentials.com). Additionally, if you need help accessing the internet at your home, please feel free to call Estevan Puerta, Excel's Manager of Benefits Access, at (617) 466-9384 for direct assistance (Estevan speaks both English and Spanish).



We find ourselves in an unprecedented situation filled with unknowns. Living with such uncertainty can understandably lead to anxiety for children (and for adults!). Here is a resource aimed at helping parents talk to children about COVID-19: bit.ly/2UhE0mn.

This week has been another reminder that we are a strong community filled with caring and compassionate people - there are many helpers among us. Together, we are modeling for our children what it means to contribute to the greater good by making sacrifices to protect our most vulnerable citizens. That is a lesson that will serve them - and us - well in the challenging days ahead.

Thank you as always,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Owen". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Owen Stearns

CEO

Excel Academy Charter Schools