



TO: Dr. Joel D. Boyd, Superintendent

FROM: Linus J. Guillory Jr., PhD, Chief Schools Officer
Robin Desmond, Chief Academic Officer

DATE: May 13, 2020

RE: Report on Remote Learning

The following report is in response to two School Committee motions regarding Remote Learning:

[By Connie Martin]: Requesting that the Administration report on the roll out and implementation of the District-wide Remote Learning Policy. The report should include the recommended benchmarks and outcome measures that the district will be using to track both short and long term effectiveness of the existing plan.

by Andy Descoteaux]: Ask the Superintendent's staff to collaborate with our teaching staff to come up with a strategic plan dealing with remote learning that will include actual learning and beyond enrichment. This should be a plan that is revisited every year to update what is potentially available for our teachers and their students.

Remote Learning Curriculum K-12

On Friday, April 24, new remote learning guidance was issued by DESE to carry us through the end of the school year. The document builds on the initial guidance offered on March 26, 2020, with a deeper emphasis on new learning. Now teaching and learning should include a focus on the content standards most critical for student success in the next grade level, or “prerequisite standards”. Upon receiving the new information, the Curriculum Coordinators reviewed and updated the curriculum maps that had already been shared with teachers for the remainder of the school year.

Grades K-4

ELA

The new DESE ELA Standards guidance aligns with the Revised Curriculum Map that was previously shared with leaders, coaches, and teachers. During Week 7, LPS began nonfiction reading in all grade levels and informational writing or opinion writing in all grade levels. Students in grades K-4 will continue to receive Writing about Reading prompts to support opinion writing remotely. LPS will end the year with a focus on fiction reading and narrative writing. While the released standards did not explicitly state the narrative writing focus, LPS knows it is important to return to this genre as a way to connect

students to the learning that has been ongoing. As all writing standards have been addressed at each grade level, this gives us the opportunity to return to narrative writing.

Math

As with ELA, the topics identified in the adjusted curriculum map for K-4 Mathematics aligns with the prerequisite content standards identified by newly released DESE guidance documents. However, there are some standards, one or two per grade level, that had not been addressed previously this year at each grade level. These standards have been identified by grade level. Moving forward, we have a team of math resource teachers assigned to each grade level, working on developing content that will support teachers in addressing these standards. These teams are soliciting feedback and input from teachers to guide this work. While the topics identified in the adjusted curriculum map do not change significantly, we will be providing resources for teachers to use to address these standards.

Science and Social Studies

LPS will meet the prerequisite standards for K-4 through a group effort between the Science and Social Studies Coordinator, classroom teachers, and content literacy teachers. A revised curriculum map was developed by analyzing which prerequisite standards had already been addressed on the original curriculum map from before the school closure, and then mapping out a coherent plan for addressing the remaining prerequisite standards between the classroom teachers and content literacy teachers. In a few cases, the topics have changed from the previous curriculum map. Weekly packet work will address prerequisite standards in science and social studies for classroom teachers. Content literacy teachers will work together to adapt resources for their lessons.

Grades 5-8

ELA

The new DESE guidance aligns with the Revised Curriculum Map that was previously shared with leaders, coaches, and teachers. During Week 7, LPS began informational reading and writing in all grades 5 & 6. In grades 7 & 8, students will return to memoir reading and writing. Students will engage in reading narrative nonfiction, as well as writing memoirs. Memoir writing is a hybrid genre that incorporates informational writing about the person, narrative writing as the structure, and argument writing about why the moments, memories, etc., are important. Students in all grades 5-8 will continue to receive Writing about Reading prompts to support opinion/argument writing remotely. LPS will end the year with a focus on fiction reading and narrative writing across various genres. These include, mystery, personal narrative, historical fiction, and science fiction. While the released standards did not explicitly state the narrative writing focus, we know it is important to return to this genre as a way to connect students to the learning that has been ongoing. As all writing standards have been addressed at each grade level, this gives us the opportunity to return to narrative writing in different genres.

Math

As with ELA, the topics identified in the adjusted curriculum map for 5-8 Mathematics aligns with the prerequisite content standards identified by newly released DESE guidance documents. However, there are some standards in grades 6 and 8 that had not been addressed previously this year at each grade level. In grade 6, there are only two standards that will require us to make some changes to the curriculum map, but grade 8 has many more so the changes to the map will be more substantial. The Math Coordinator and math resource teachers have begun discussing these changes with a group of math resource teachers and 8th grade math teachers. A team of math resource teachers at each grade level are developing content that will support teachers in their efforts. The map will remain the same for grades 5 and 7, but grades 6 and 8

will include content to address the standards recommended by the DESE guiding document where appropriate.

Science and Social Studies

Many of the prerequisite standards have been met in topics taught September through March, and the remaining prerequisite standards will be addressed in the last units. A revised curriculum map was developed by analyzing which prerequisite standards had already been addressed on the original curriculum map from before the school closure, and then mapping out a coherent plan for addressing the remaining prerequisite standards. (The only exception is fifth grade social studies, where the prerequisite standards represent curriculum new to LPS which will be addressed when we are not in a remote learning environment.) Weekly packet work will continue to address prerequisite standards in science and social studies, and can be an additional resource for teachers.

Grades 9-12

Lowell High School’s remote learning plan is designed to provide opportunities for students to feel connected and to deepen their learning during our time away from the LHS campus. Students will engage with course content and practice key academic skills through a combination of teacher directed and student self-directed learning activities. LHS faculty will provide students with assignments that reinforce and expand upon key academic skills. Students will be expected to complete these assignments and to regularly communicate with their teachers to share their learning and to receive feedback and support.

Metrics

In alignment with DESE guidance issued March 26th and updated April 24th, our school staff continue to work to engage students in meaningful remote learning experiences as well as provide students with feedback on their work; the manner in which this is done is ever-evolving and refined so that it is best suited for the classroom/family. The following metrics are being utilized to track the implementation of the remote learning plan:

- Percentage of Student /Family Communication
- Percentage of Student engagement/participation
- Student progress reports/grading

The first metric we sought, and continue to improve upon, is the number of students/families that have engaged in two-way dialogue with the school/classroom teacher. As reflected in the chart below, you will be able to see the number of schools and to what degree (percentage) they have reached their families.

Chart 1: What percentage of students have been reached? (Confirmed two-way communication)

%	April 23rd	May 14th
100	9	19
97-99	18	9
94-96	0	0
90-95	1	0

As we worked to establish two-way communication with students and families, schools continue to assess the degree to which students are participating in remote learning as well as set goals for increasing engagement. Each school continues to account for student participation through the various media: online platforms, packets, virtual classrooms, etc. School leaders have reported average ranges of 50-88% of students participating on a daily and/or weekly basis. Each school is accounting for the various ranges of participation for their students and continues to reach out to families to encourage their engagement as well as understand any needs and challenges.

Chart 2: *What percentage of students are engaging on a daily/weekly basis?*

%	April 23rd	May 14th
90-100		
80-89	1	12
70-79	3	6
60-69	14	7
50-59	9	3
40-49	6	0

The Lowell Public Schools continues our commitment to supporting students and families during this period of remote learning. We understand that the needs of our community are consistently evolving, and the plans for remote learning and grading are designed with this in mind. Remote learning is not expected to recreate the same learning experiences that students would have in a traditional school day. Therefore, grading during this period of remote learning is not intended to replicate our traditional approach to grading.

In the elementary grades, student ratings from the first two trimesters prior to the school closure will remain final. Families received report cards from the winter trimester, and at the close of school, and families will receive their final report card based on their students’ progress this year that includes ways they have demonstrated growth during remote learning. At the middle level, students’ grades from the first and second quarter will remain final and used to create the numerical final grade. Additionally, families will receive a progress report, and a final report card that includes student progress from the period just prior to the school closure and remote learning.

All schools that serve grades K-8 in Lowell will follow the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education guidance to award students “credit” or “no credit” for their work during remote learning in the form of a “credit” or “incomplete” rating. Student ratings will be determined based on evidence of students’ engagement in learning experiences, including, but not limited to, the degree to which students complete learning assignments to the best of their ability, and the degree to which students and families communicate with educators. Schools understand that families are facing a range of challenges, so schools will make considerations regarding equitable access to learning experiences including technology,

health, and learning needs for students with disabilities and English Language Learners when determining student ratings.

For high school students in the Lowell Public schools, student ratings for semester one will be used to calculate student Grade Point Averages for the 19-20 school year. For Semester Two, in alignment with the K-8 levels and the recommendations of DESE, students will also earn a “credit” or “no credit” rating based on the degree to which students meet the learning expectations in their courses. Students’ work prior to the school closure on March 13th will determine their grade for Quarter Three. Quarter Four represents the work completed during remote learning. Similarly, educators understand the range of challenges that students may face accessing learning and are committed to flexibility to support students including no penalties for late work and continuous opportunities to work with their teachers to resubmit and revise work. Students who are not able to earn credit during remote learning will have opportunities for credit recovery in Summer and Fall 2020.

We encourage families to connect with the Lowell Public School educators supporting their students when there are barriers and challenges that are impacting students ability to engage in learning, so we can work in partnership with our community to support access to these valuable learning experiences. We will continue to provide updates as the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education updates guidance and recommendations to school districts.

Long-term, the goal is to compare student learning from the spring to the fall in K-8. The essential question and goal is: *were we able to sustain student learning during the COVID-19 closure?* At the High School level, student course credit acquisition will be the primary measure used to track student progress.