

William R. Hite, Jr., Ed.D.
Superintendent

March 26, 2020

Dear School District of Philadelphia Families,

I hope you and your families are healthy and safe as the COVID-19 pandemic continues to evolve. We have been working on a plan to provide all students with access to digital learning opportunities in the event that our schools remain closed long term. The plan provides a Chromebook to every District student who needs one for learning at home and makes digital content available to retain and learn skills with the support of a teacher.

On Thursday, March 26, the Board of Education jumpstarted the plan by approving up to \$11 million for the purchase of up to 50,000 new Chromebooks. The District will determine the exact number of new devices to purchase once the central office works with each school to determine how many Chromebooks they currently have in their schools for distribution and how many of their students will need one.

The School District is working with the City of Philadelphia to create a comprehensive list of low-cost Internet options or access to free WiFi mobile hotspots across the City. The list will be available on the District's website and the City of Philadelphia's website by the week of April 6th.

For those families who reside in areas of the city where Xfinity WiFi is available, Comcast is making Xfinity WiFi free for everyone – including non-Xfinity Internet subscribers. For a map of Xfinity WiFi hotspots, visit www.xfinity.com/wifi.

Here's the overall plan and what you can expect:

March 23-27, 2020

- Principals estimate the number of students in their school who do not have a computer at home, and identify staff to help organize and distribute chromebooks at the school.

March 30-April 3, 2020

- School teams organize Chromebooks at their school for distribution.
- Digital content developed; teachers receive virtual training on how to use the digital resources to support all of the students they serve.

April 6-8, 2020

- Families will be notified of their scheduled pick-up date and time in multiple ways such as phone calls and text messages.

April 13-17, 2020

- Chromebooks distributed to students/families at schools using strict social distancing practices and other safety protocols. Support for safe Chromebook distribution will be supported by School District staff, the City of Philadelphia and Office of School Safety.
- Teachers begin using digital learning tools to provide optional, non-graded, virtual instruction for students. This content should reinforce skills, provide enrichment opportunities and integrate new content as appropriate. Teachers can also use their own activities to engage their students.
-
- Students and families will also have access to optional online tutorials for Google Classroom and other Google tools.

This is new for us all. There is still much work to do to finalize and implement the plan. We are all committed to ensuring that our students can continue learning in this unprecedented time while we work to keep everyone safe and healthy. We will approach this work thoughtfully and with the urgency that our students and families deserve.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "William R. Hite Jr." with a stylized flourish at the end.

William R. Hite Jr., Ed.D.
Superintendent
The School District of Philadelphia