

## **Guidance on Working Remotely: Teachers, Counselors, Nurses, and Other School-Based Staff**

March 30, 2020

From the very moment that the District announced it had to close school buildings in response to COVID-19, staff from around the District have been diving into this new world with creative solutions and approaches to reaching our students. We know that for the past two weeks, many teachers, counselors, nurses, and so many other roles have already been hard at work to serve students in a new way. We want to thank and honor all of those who have already embraced this challenging time with a keen dedication to our students.

In general, we know that this effort, which is the central focus and purpose of our work as a District, will look different from our traditional work but must continue in service and support of our students and our mission to serve the children of this city. We also understand that there is a greater need for clarity around what this work should look like collectively. To this end, in addition to the general guidance issued for all staff working remotely, this supplemental document provides additional guidance specifically for teachers, counselors, nurses, and other school-based staff. While the schedule for each school and for each teacher and staff member will not look exactly the same, we are providing an overview of the various activities staff can and should be engaging in during this time working remotely.

We encourage teachers and school counselors to work together to service the needs of students and for each to engage with other individuals who support their schools including, but not limited to assistant program coordinators, BCAs, family engagement liaisons, climate liaisons, college and career readiness coordinators, climate managers, EL coordinators, prevention and intervention liaisons, climate and culture coordinators, nurses, SBTLS, special education assistants, STEP positions, SISLs, SPECMs, SSAs, PreK support staff and student climate staff.

What follows in this document is 1) an overview of the general expectations for a work schedule; 2) specific examples of what this work will entail for teachers, counselors, nurses, secretaries, and all school staff together; 3) a general explanation of the use of technology using while working remotely.

As the situation is not static, we also know that some of this guidance will change over time. As information from the federal and state departments of education is updated, we will be sure to provide updated guidance to our staff.

## **Work Schedule**

We generally expect our teachers and other school-based staff to be participating in work activities and available during their traditional schedule. Your schedule working remotely should include preparation time, common planning time, office hours with students (details shared below), lunch, and breaks during the day as needed to accommodate your home life.

We also want to emphasize that working remotely will require much more flexibility than the traditional work day. Specifically, we acknowledge that everyone's capacity to do work is different given their different situations at home and therefore understand that more flexibility is necessary when working from home during this time. Simply put, this situation requires compassion, understanding, and an ability to adapt to changing needs.

For instance, a teacher might have plans to join a school faculty meeting virtually and ten minutes prior to the call have an issue arise with a child that requires them to either be late or not attend the meeting at all. We understand this. During this time, proactive communication is crucial. We expect that teachers, counselors, and their administrators maintain ongoing, two-way communication about availability. Administrators should work with teachers to address individual issues .

## TEACHERS

**Providing a Continuity of Education for Students:** The Office of Academic Support has and will continue to provide general guidance around implementation of the District’s Continuity of Education Plan for students. An overview of our approach can be accessed [HERE](#). In short, digital activities will be accessible to K-12 students beginning the week of April 20th. Until then, teachers should use the learning guides, located on the District’s website (which are also distributed to students at the District’s food sites) and continue to engage with students in activities that reinforce or extend prior learning.

Specifically, for now, the District will be focused on review and enrichment activities. During academic review and enrichment time, new content should not be taught. Review and enrichment activities should be related to content from before March 1st in the scope and sequence. However, as one exception, project-based learning can and should continue, without grading. Beginning April 15th, K-12 teachers will have access to additional review and enrichment activities provided by the Office of Academics to upload into their Google Classroom in advance of the week of April 20th. Teachers will be able to engage in individual preparation time and planning in order to upload and share materials with students as appropriate.

Should the District remain closed through May, we will then engage in a hybrid model of enrichment/review and planned instruction (new learning for students, graded assignments, etc.) beginning the week of May 4th. This infusion of planned instruction is to provide students with opportunities to obtain necessary skills and content for end-of-year requirements as well as to address the unique needs of specific populations of students (e.g. credit recovery for seniors). Prior to implementing any planned instruction, specific guidance will be shared with teachers, principals, assistant superintendents, and families for whom this is relevant.

During the week of March 30th, all teachers should begin to schedule and offer 1.5 hours a day of office hours for student questions about enrichment activities and to check-in with their students. Some teachers are already offering these office hours and can continue on; others should work this week to share their office hour schedule with parents and families. Office hours could include a variety of activities such as:

- Guide and model the application of skills and problem-solving aligned to lessons.
- Respond to students’ questions and provide feedback to students’ work.
- Support individual or groups of students who need additional engagement: students who need additional support, students with IEPs, and English Language Learners
- Parent/Family/ Student Contact
  - Contact students, parents/families who haven’t visited the classroom.
  - Respond to questions of students and families aligned to assigned activities and tasks.
  - Offer additional at home strategies that have been previously shared with students, parents/families

The structure of the office hours will vary by teacher and should be scheduled by the teacher in a manner that best meets the needs of their individual schedule. For instance, one teacher

might want to hold office hours for students from 9-10:30 am Mondays, Wednesday, and Fridays and from 12-1:30 on Tuesday and Thursday. Another might want to have them from 8:30am-10am every day. The important point is that, whatever the schedule, that families know and understand when and how they can interact with the teacher through office hours.

Teacher's time during the week will also include their own preparation time for their Office Hours, academic enrichment activities, and, eventually for planned instruction if/when we move to that model.

Finally, digital and online activities for K-12 students will be designed to be age- and grade-appropriate. In particular, in accordance with best practices, screen time for kindergarteners should be limited to 1-2 hours per day.

### **Participating in Individual Education Plan Meetings (IEP) and Related Special Education**

**Activities:** Based on guidance from the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) and the Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE), participation in IEP meetings must move forward in a best faith effort during this time. The Office of Specialized Services has prepared a document that outlines the [Reasonable Expectations for Special Education Teachers and Related Service Providers](#) during COVID19. With the use of remote technology and access to EasyIEP, the privacy of information can and should be maintained while these conversations move forward.

- Special Education teachers may share Google Classrooms with classroom teachers.
- Staff Participation in IEP and Related SPED Activities ([HERE](#))
- Guidance for Completing Evaluation Reports, ReEvaluation Reports, and IEPs ([HERE](#))

### **Supporting English Learners (ELs):**

- ESL teachers should engage their English Learner students by reviewing review and enrichment materials provided by the Office of Academics and uploading and sharing these materials with students that are most appropriate to meet the needs of the EL students.
- ESL teachers may share Google Classrooms with classroom teachers
- As with all teachers, ESL teachers are expected to participate in 1.5 hours a day of office hours for students. Additionally, ESL teachers are encouraged to conference with classroom and content teachers to align support for EL students and continue collaboration.
- ESL teachers designated as the EL Point (EL Coordinator) will receive weekly updates via email from the Office of Multilingual Curriculum and Programs with guidance regarding PDE compliance processes. Any questions related to EL compliance processes can be directed to [multilingual@philasd.org](mailto:multilingual@philasd.org).

### **PreKindergarten Teachers (Head Start & Bright Futures): Providing Support for Children's Cognitive, Social and Emotional Development:**

Consistent with recommendations from the Academy of American Pediatrics about limiting screen time for young children, online instruction will not be offered for preK students. Instead, the families of preK children in District-operated classrooms will be receiving in the mail, via U.S. Postal Service, a home activity guide consisting of over 40 separate activities that focus on a variety of skills across language and literacy, mathematical thinking, scientific thinking, social studies, physical motor skills and

the arts. PreK teachers are being asked to connect with families via telephone and other established communication channels (eg Classroom Dojo, Remind App, etc) to support these home learning activities and respond to questions families may have about their child's development.

Like all teachers, preK teachers should schedule 1.5 hours a day of office hours to be available to conference with families who have specific questions about home learning activities or other requests for support. In addition, preK teachers should attempt to proactively connect with families at least two times a week to provide support; particular focus should be given to families that have not been in touch during any of the daily office hours that week.

If a preK teacher is unable to contact a family, the teacher should reach out to her/his assigned Education Field Administrator, who will work with the PreK Family Services team to locate the family and re-establish contact.

Education Field Administrators will continue to provide guidance and support to preK teachers for any needed technical support and guidance, including assigning other Early Childhood staff (nurses, family services staff, social workers, etc.) to work with families in need as identified by the teacher.

## **SCHOOL COUNSELORS**

**Providing Support for Students and Families:** The Office of Prevention and Intervention provided specific guidance in a letter to counselors dated March 28th and will continue to provide guidance, resources, and updates on how best we support our students and families during this time period.

Similar to teachers, during the week of March 30th, all counselors should begin to schedule and offer 1.5 hours a day of office hours for student questions about enrichment activities and to check-in with their students. Some counselors are already offering these office hours and can continue on; others should work this week to share their office hour schedule with parents and families.

At a high level, tasks counselors can complete during this time are as follows:

- With the school principal, coordinate an effort at the school where they, in conjunction with teachers and other school-based staff, will contact all students one to two times per week to determine if supports are needed. At each school site, the adults assigned to do this will look different depending on the positions at the school. To be clear, counselors alone are not expected to contact all of the students in a school and the amount of successful connections per week will depend greatly on student and parent availability as well. What matters most is that students know what is expected of them at this time, to hear from students about their questions and issues, and that we stay connected to students until we return to our buildings.

- Prioritize 12th graders to ensure they are preparing to graduate, have post secondary plans and requirements completed, including applications, interviews, and recommendations.
- Ensure rising 8th graders have made their high school selection
- Review 11th grader's transcripts to determine what is needed in the 12th grade, including credit recovery.
- Conduct virtual advisory sessions Click [here](#) to access the template for the Counselor Virtual Log. Please make a copy and rename the document before inputting student information.
- Updating 504s through EasyIEP: Counselors should review their assigned 504 plans. If it is found that (1) the plan is expired or is expiring soon the plan should be updated and meetings scheduled with the student and family (e.g. video/teleconference). (2) If a current plan exists but is no longer needed, the plan should be discontinued. Counselors can contact their Student Support Specialist: Kenisha Coley ([kcoley@philasd.org](mailto:kcoley@philasd.org).) for assistance with 504s.
- Creating or updating your school's counseling plan.
- Connect students and families to resources developed by the Office of Postsecondary Readiness, collaborate on the development of strategies, continue to assist schools with Naviance support and help to ensure students are ready for college, work and life. Counselors can contact the Postsecondary Readiness Office at [collegeandcareer@philasd.org](mailto:collegeandcareer@philasd.org).

If school counselors need additional support, in general, as they work in these areas, please contact their Prevention and Intervention liaison or Jayme Banks at [jbanks2@philasd.org](mailto:jbanks2@philasd.org).

## **SCHOOL NURSES**

School nurses are vital contributors to school-based teams and should be included in, and lead discussions regarding homebound services, medical 504 accommodations, coordinating with health care professionals seeking information about their patient's medical needs and more. Nurses may be asked to assist more student engagement in the coming weeks if the healthcare crisis escalates. Additional and specific guidance for nurses will be sent in a separate communication from the Office of Student Supports.

## **SECRETARIES**

School secretaries are a vital part of the school communities in bridging parent and staff communications which helps to create a sense of community. School secretaries support collaboration by creating and communicating via calendars, flyers, robo calls as defined by the school principal, emails to parents, announcements of class dojo and support staff in finding emergency contact information. Secretaries will serve as a great resource when discussing communications with parents during faculty meetings.

## **ALL SCHOOL STAFF**

**Faculty Meetings and Common Planning Time:** Principals may call faculty meetings to discuss issues, maintain a sense of community, and discuss topics as new initiatives are rolled out. Other meetings may also occur during this time, including Common Planning Time, MTSS team meetings to discuss current and future support to students, and Team Initiated Problem Solving (TIPS) tier I team meetings in schools implementing the PBIS framework. To ensure staff have enough notice, these meetings should be scheduled with a minimum of 48 hours notice. Schools should not have the need for more than one to two faculty meetings per week during this time.

**Participation in Professional Development:** Virtual training sessions will be offered starting the week of March 30th on a variety of topics, such as how to utilize technology to provide effective academic enrichment. We understand that some teachers may need to wait to begin office hours after they participate in this training and others can proceed without this training. Additional professional development and review of materials will also be provided by principals. Teachers should receive advanced notice of expectations so that they can plan to participate.

Registration for central virtual training sessions will take place in Cornerstone so that Act 48 hours will be counted for participation in this professional development. Centrally-delivered sessions will be recorded and available for teachers to refer to at a later date if needed.

**Social and Emotional Stability and Support:** For academic review and enrichment to effectively occur students need to be emotionally and socially ready to engage. At this time, perhaps more than ever, when students have been away from their schools for several weeks, many are without the stable, reliable support they receive when attending school. Even remotely, students continue to need ongoing support from their school community members who care and, just as they would during the school day, help identify solutions and or convey concerns and problem-solving solutions to others for resolution. This can also be a time to continue to grow relationships with your students and learn about their interests, motivations and needs.

We know that many of our staff are already consistently reaching out to students. We ask that, in an effort coordinated by the principal, that every adult reach out to an assigned group of students one to two times per week. Teachers may accomplish this during Office Hours for some students, but there are a variety of times in which this can and will be accomplished by staff. Counselors may be doing some of these connections, teachers others, and still other school-based staff also making these connections. The principal will work with the school staff this week to determine the specific students with whom to connect.

We anticipate many students and families may share the need for food or medicine or their fears and anxiety about the current crisis. Some family members have become fearful of deportation, criminal activity, and possible abuse – this impacts students. To assist with the many issues that could be raised during the two to three conversations each week adults will



have with students, we offer the list of resources [here](#). Should you identify additional resources, please share with us.

**Other related duties as relevant to one's specific job at the school.** Principals may have additional tasks and duties for teachers and other school-based staff, as is typical, related to one's specific job duties. Certain roles, such as SBTLs, will not necessarily be providing direct academic enrichment to students on the same schedule as classroom teachers and may be spending time preparing supports for teachers other related duties.

For example, SBTLs and other teacher leaders fully released from a teaching schedule could support in the following ways:

- analyze existing data including but not limited to benchmarks, AIMSweb, STAR to inform which activities would be most beneficial for enrichment and review
- for a classroom where there is a teacher vacancy, take on the responsibilities for that Google Classroom (adding activities from the Google Site to their Google Drive and then posting to a Google Classroom for students) and providing feedback to students
- support teachers with selecting activities from the Google Site, developing their own activities that align to the guiding principles, or model facilitation of discussion with students through platforms such as Google Meet
- develop grade band virtual classroom culture building activities that teachers can use. For example, prompts specific to the school's PBIS plan, finding videos and developing a few reflection questions for the teacher to ask students, etc.
- create and facilitate any relevant professional learning activities for teachers to participate in virtually (how to run a morning meeting on Google Meet, review of specific Google Classroom skills that the staff may be struggling with, best practices for giving feedback to students virtually)
- for schools with a large staff, serve as the principal's designee to answer questions and provide information for certain teams of teachers.



## **Use of Technology While Working Remotely**

Teachers who require additional technology from home will have an opportunity to pick up a Chromebook from 440. Separate communication on this will be forthcoming from the IT Department when that is made available.

Staff have raised questions about how to ensure their privacy is maintained while working remotely. To be clear, we do not expect that staff share their private number. Staff can either block their personal telephone numbers when communicating with students by phone using \*67 prior to dialing the number or adjusting their own phone settings. Alternatively, staff can avoid the use of their phone altogether if they choose by utilizing various online forums to communicate with students and support their learning, including Google Meet, Google Classroom and/or creating a Google voice phone account.

Of course, we know that staff must maintain appropriate and professional relationships even as communication methods change during this unique time. If at any point staff feel that boundaries are being crossed, they should report their concerns to their principal for further guidance and/or report issues of potential suspected abuse as a mandatory reporter under Act 126.