Portland Public Schools’ Goals During Remote Learning

- To stay connected with each student.
- To support teachers as they balance a new kind of teaching, their instructional goals and their own family and health needs.
- To maintain and deepen mastery of course standards and introduce new learning/standards when there’s readiness and need.
- To mitigate the inequities that can be exacerbated during remote learning.

Given that we now will be engaging in remote learning for the rest of the school year and thanks to feedback from students and staff as well as district leadership, we will be making a series of adjustments after spring break so we can better meet these goals. This is what we’re calling **CBHS Remote Learning 2.0**. What follows are the highlights.

**It’s become clear that** two of our Character Pathways are most important right now.

1) **Be Well**, first and foremost
   - Be attentive to your physical and mental health.
   - Seek adequate sleep, nutrition and exercise.
   - Seek help with your wellness whenever necessary.

2) **Build Community**, as possible - at home, at school, in your neighborhood, in your world
   - Foster inclusivity. Make sure others in the community feel safe and comfortable.
   - Serve your community when needed.
   - Work to dismantle inequities.

Both of these Character Pathways will be central to our work in crew and between advisor and advisee. Advisors will keep helping you address the fundamental questions of crew, in ways both large and small: Who am I? How am I doing? What are my plans for the future?

**Our academic goal** is for students to deepen and strengthen the essential skills and knowledge represented by our course standards through meaningful, engaging curriculum.

**What will remain the same for the rest of the spring trimester?**

- We will engage you in new and deeper learning related to essential course standards and often compelling social justice issues.
- You may engage in long-term interdisciplinary projects and expeditions.
- You will receive .67 UPs for a course if your work demonstrates essential competency in each course standard assessed.

**What will be different?**

- **The amount** of new course-based learning we will expect of you is less. You may have noticed this already in your classes. The pace of new learning will not be what we would expect in person. It can’t be. There will still be plenty of rich, vital learning challenges, but this may mean that standards or projects that have typically happened in the spring trimester will be pared down or eliminated. We know health and home responsibilities necessitate this. *But to be clear, overall,*
we are not reducing expectations, we are shifting them. Our academic demand will be less (though still significant) because our expectations have increased that you Be Well (first and foremost) and Build Community (as possible).

- Most student feedback about the daily schedule has been positive. There was some consistent concern, however, about the length of classes and the need for more flexible, screen-free time. So, after break, class blocks will be 10 minutes shorter and we’ve added a new wellness block for the last 30 minutes of the day: “Screen-Free at 3.” Watch for tips from Mr. Shibics about how to best use this.

- Some students and crews also asked about adding more opportunities to interact with students in other grade levels and have more student-directed informal learning and fun. So we are adding a Low Key X-Block into the schedule after Crew on Wednesdays. Get your proposals for Low Key X Blocks into Mr Leque or Mr Hale before break.

- We will hold you to the same grade level standards and continue to use rubrics to clarify learning. District-wide grades will now be limited to “Not Yet” and “Meets Standards,”* so both students and teachers can focus on what’s essential. A grade of “Meets” is the same level of performance as a “3” in our typical system, We hope this means less focus on grades and more on learning, for students and staff. There will still be an “Exceeds” category in rubrics, and students aiming to exceed the standard in their work, and this term may be used by teachers in their feedback to you, but only the designations “Met” and “Not Yet” will appear on report cards. UPs earned from this trimester will, of course, count towards your graduation requirements. But course grades from this trimester will not count towards your overall GPA*. (Colleges all over the country are already doing this and have made clear that simplified grading scales from this time period will not be held against future applicants.) We expect this decision to be a relief for many and deflating for others. After first attending to wellness and building community, we know some will have more remaining capacity and opportunity to dedicate to academic work than others. We will not put a ceiling on the academic heights to which you can soar, but we do not want to penalize those who are not able to soar like they otherwise might due to life circumstances.

- For similar reasons, HOWL grades will be altered. HOWL grades will still be commonly recorded for formative feedback. On report cards, HOWL grades will be used only for positive recognition, to identify students who are consistently able to meet the Big 3 of completing work, meeting deadlines and participating effectively. Only HOWL grades of 3 and 3+ will be noted on the spring trimester report card. Other students will not receive an overall HOWL grade - because we can not and should not assess the HOWL you are putting into your home life. Once again, we need to make space for each of you to Be Well, first and foremost, and to Build Community, as possible.

- Finally, students who need more time and opportunity to meet course standards due to life circumstances will receive them. Traditional classes will end May 29th*. Students who need more time and opportunity to meet course standards will have the last weeks of school, until at least June 12th, to do so*. More details about how these last weeks of school will work will be shared early in May. (Note: The current last student day for grades 9-11 is June 19th. The Superintendent is proposing to the School Board on April 28th that the last student day be June 12th and the following week be used for teacher professional development.)
There’s much to process here. All of this will be shared in writing with students and parents. Thanks to all of the students and staff who’ve helped us recognize what needs to stay the same - and what needs to shift as we head into the last chapter of the school year. And we recognize there are many things we will need to figure out, together, for our last five weeks. We will all benefit from the coming break to refresh and reflect. Our learning target in September was as follows: “We will co-create a more just, equitable and kind community which maximizes learning and growth for all and which catalyzes excellent work that betters our community and world. In some ways, the noble goals of that target have never seemed more elusive, and in other ways, both subtle and profound, this target has never seemed closer. Thanks to each of you for the every day, gritty, hand-washing, vigilant-for-grandma, we-are-crew excellence that has made each of us, and even our glorious community, somehow, grow stronger and better.

*Consistent with new K-12 district guidelines*
Greeting Fabulous Seniors. I miss you. Especially Monte, and Mlnka....

In the survey you all took last week, about 85% of CBHS seniors, in fact about 85% of every PPS high school senior, preferred that we postpone any graduation ceremony in the hopes that we can do an in-person graduation ceremony mid-summer. Thanks for the feedback.

Consequently, although most of you will complete your PPS graduation requirements by the end of May, we have currently identified the week of August 3rd as the best time for the Class of 2020 Graduation Ceremonies to happen. We will still, of course, have to abide by any city, state and federal health guidelines about large gatherings that may exist at that time. Many of you commented that your hope was to have a ceremony that follows in your school's traditions. If permissible, the plan is to have graduation at Merrill Auditorium according to the following schedule:

Wednesday, August 5th at 10:30am - Portland High School
Thursday, August 6th at 10:30am - Deering High School
**Thursday, August 6th at 6pm** - Casco Bay High School

If for public health reasons, Merrill is not an option, but an outdoor venue is possible, our back-up plan would be Fitzpatrick Stadium or Memorial Field. (And, yes, we are working on Plan C, and Plan D, if neither of those two plans are viable.) Morning marching practice and other typical year-end events, such as Senior Awards Assembly, Prom and Project Graduation would also occur, as possible, **the week of August 3rd**. So seniors please do whatever you can to be present and available that week. (Those of you with jobs: please give your employers a heads up now.)

Thanks so much for your patience and resilience through all the anxiety and disappointment. Thanks to all of you who are doing so much to continue to lead and shape and build our community - by sharing your creations, your time and your caring. Good luck to all of the seniors working to meet standards in Grad Camp. And thanks to all of the peers helping peers to get to the Mountain Top. I am so looking forward to your cafe piece and final words. And we all deeply look forward to celebrating your epic accomplishments. The Summit is nigh.