

FAQ'S ABOUT SCOTCH PLAINS-FANWOOD AT-HOME LEARNING PLAN WHILE CLOSED FOR COVID-19

For what dates are schools closed?

Schools are closed effective Monday, March 16, until further notice. All extra-curricular activities are cancelled as well.

Why are schools closed?

Though there were no confirmed cases of COVID-19 in either Scotch Plains or Fanwood at the time the decision was made, this action is necessary to mitigate the spread of COVID-19.

Will the school year be extended to make up for the days we are closed?

Due to the unprecedented nature of the current nation-wide health threat, the New Jersey Department of Education (NJDOE), for the first time ever in its history, is allowing districts to count at-home learning days as school days when they must close for COVID-19. This allowance and requirement is subject to review by NJDOE. We have submitted our plan to NJDOE for March 16 through March 27, and NJDOE has completed its review with no revisions required. This means that we will not be required to make up the days that we are closed for COVID-19 through March 27.

What if schools are closed beyond March 27?

We will await further clarification from NJDOE, and we will post additional at-home learning resources to the website by the end of the day on March 27.

Where can I find the at-home learning assignments for my child?

At-home learning assignments for March 16 through March 27 are located on the district website under the tab, "Our District and Community." If schools remain closed beyond March 27, additional at-home learning assignments will be posted.

How long should my child be working at home each day?

As required by NJDOE, the anticipated time spent in at-home learning is a minimum of ten hours over a five-day week. (For Pre-Kindergarten students, the anticipated time is five hours over a five-day week.) This is consistent with NJDOE's time requirement for students who are on extended absence for medical or other reasons.

The ten hours may be spent at any time during the week convenient for the student and the family, and is to be considered a goal. As is the case for all student work, the actual time spent may vary based on the student's age and learning program or courses, and therefore may be longer or shorter than the ten hours per week.

Are parents expected to monitor students' work at home?

The at-home learning activities were designed, to the extent possible, to reinforce, maintain and extend skills that have been taught in school and that develop and deepen over a long period of time. As such, the activities were designed to be within the capabilities of students to accomplish on their own, without requiring parental involvement. Our youngest learners, however, will require assistance based on their developmental level.

What if my child is sick and cannot complete the assignments?

For any school day that your child is sick, please follow the normal attendance procedure of calling the attendance line at your child's school to have an absence recorded.

What should I do if my child needs a book or personal item that was left at school?

Please contact your principal to schedule a time to go to school to pick it up.

What should my child do if he/she finishes the assigned work early?

To the extent possible, we have chosen learning activities that reinforce, maintain and extend skills that have been taught in school and that develop and deepen over a long period of time. As such, the activities can be done on an ongoing basis, and may be repeated in different ways, at different levels, and for different lengths of time. This offers some flexibility so that students may work longer than ten hours per week if their circumstances at home permit. Many assignments provide flexibility for student choice ("Do three of the following," for example), which affords the student the option of doing more than the required activities. Additionally, students may use the educational websites in the at-home learning assignments, and they may continue to read for information or pleasure.

What should I do if my child or I have a question about an assignment?

Parent-teacher and student-teacher communication is important during the time that schools are closed. Parents and students are encouraged to email any questions about assignments or progress to their teachers. Teachers will respond by the end of the next school day. Administrators will be working on your behalf as well, and are available by phone and email for consultation or advisement as needed.

Why is the district not using real-time video instruction by teachers?

The task before the district is how to provide instruction under our immediate, challenging and unprecedented circumstances. The use of real-time video instruction by teachers would require a consistency of technology availability and skill in teachers' homes, in families' homes, and at school. That, in turn, would require an investment of time and finances that we do not currently have. Equally importantly, NJDOE requires, and it is our moral and ethical responsibility to provide, equitable access for all children to equivalent learning opportunities. Because not all families have internet access at home, hard copies or other resources were sent home; additionally, the learning activities were designed with an element of choice in mind, so that they could be accomplished with or without internet access. Video instruction presents an opportunity for future consideration; at the current time, however, it is not a satisfactory solution.
