

May 1, 2020

Dear Parent(s)/Guardian(s):

It is hard to imagine that we have turned the calendar page to May. Since we left school in March, all our families have faced many new challenges. I hope that you are all safe and doing well during this trying time.

Our March Madness – Tournament of Books has two winners, *The Boy in the Striped Pajamas*, by John Boyne, chosen by our 7th and 8th graders and *Diary of a Wimpy Kid*, by Jeff Kinney, chosen by our 5th and 6th graders. You can view the March Madness – Tournament of Books bracket on my Principal's page.

The Community of Inquiry theoretical framework notes that there are three interconnected pieces to make online learning successful (Swan, Garrison, & Richardson, 2009). The framework consists of three interconnected presences: social, teaching and cognitive. All three must be present to make online learning meaningful and successful. The first step, however, is to recognize students need to develop an online social presence to allow for open communication with their classmates. This includes being able to share their emotions and values in an open and honest forum without fear of rejection from their peers. Students must also shift away from their gaming online communication habits to real life communication, as if we were in a classroom at Lincoln Orens Middle School.

This week, we began holding Google Meets. The excitement from both the teachers and students was evident in all my conversations. Teachers shared many stories with me; for instance, one teacher had the students bring their pets to class and one student brought a pet tortoise named Eric. You may have even observed some of our students running around the house looking for the scavenger hunt items posted by their teacher. Students shared how they are dealing with the school closure and what they are looking forward to when they get back to school. The teachers all spoke about how nice it was to see and hear their students. I am looking forward to joining some of these Google Meets and might even bring my own pet dog, Belle. Some of our students were not ready to use video (which is fine) since these students are just starting to develop their social presence. All of our students are encouraged to attend the many different Google Meets available to them throughout the week since Google Meets are a great way for students to begin to develop and feel comfortable with their online social presence.

If your child is having difficulty with any of the assignments, please send an email to the teacher and title the subject line: Virtual Hand Raise.

Together, we are better!

Sincerely,

Bruce Hoffman, Ed.D.
Principal