

Director of Pupil Personnel Services Update May 7, 2020

Dear Parents and Community Members,

As we move through online learning and remote instruction, this message builds upon last week's communication related to fostering a positive and productive home environment during this time of remote learning. The information below is taken from the United States Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) (https://osepideasthatwork.org/sites/default/files/SWDLearning-Families%20Brief_April%202020.pdf), which is dedicated to improving academic results for infants, toddlers, children and youth with disabilities ages birth through 21. The following information consists of research-supported practices for parents and families to support virtual instruction and skill development for all children as well as students with disabilities. Specifically, this message focuses on behavioral supports and strategies, the role of reinforcement and rewards, and habits for organization.

Positive and productive approaches to learning shape behavior and help establish a successful learning experience. They build on social, emotional and behavioral skills, reduce distractions and prevent the potential for problem behaviors. They include:

- Establish and stick to a clear routine. This includes having regular bedtimes and morning routines, using a daily schedule, having meal times, and designate a learning time.
- Establish expectations for learning so that distractions can be minimized. For example, keep background noise to a minimum while concentrating on schoolwork and keep books, notebooks, and materials in a safe location so they can be easily accessed.
- Teach, remind, and support expected behaviors with positive feedback or praise. For example, "It's great to see you doing your best! I think you'll be proud of your work." If an instance occurs that requires correction or redirection, be calm, brief, and provide an opportunity for your child to practice the desired behavior. According to research, redirections are effective when keeping a ratio of 5 positive interactions or praise statements for every 1 negative interaction or corrective statement.

When possible, use rewards that can help increase students' attention to schoolwork and motivate them during this time of distance learning. Parents may wish to give rewards for desired behaviors when children follow rules or directions and when they show improved behavior. Rewards can be used to increase a positive behavior or decrease a negative one. These may be social, activity-based, tangible, or intangible:

- Social rewards are rewards of someone's time and attention. A parent's attention can be the most rewarding for a child. Show attention with physical rewards such as hugs and means of affection, as well as verbal rewards such as praise.
- Activity-based rewards are rewards that include desirable activities. Use activity rewards like playing a game, telling a story, or going on a bike ride together.
- Symbolic rewards are rewards that can be "banked" – like stickers on a chart, poker chips, or pennies in a jar. The child earns one for good behavior. Then, as the child earns

more, he or she “buys” a reward activity later. Praise can also be used for good behavior whenever awarding one of these stickers or pennies.

- Tangible rewards are rewards that can be held, seen, or touched. They include healthy snacks, toys, or other objects that are desirable. Be sure to combine social praise with these types of rewards. It’s best to use these when you start teaching your child something new or difficult. Have your child choose the rewards that will be earned. Remember that the rewards do not need to be big or costly to work.
- Intangible rewards include positive comments or verbal praise, smiles, pats on the back, hugs, extra attention, and special privileges.

In addition, the following habits for organization and on-task behaviors are supported by reinforcing positive behaviors. Some examples include:

- Have a well-organized physical learning environment (i.e., create a learning space, stick to the schedule, use a color-coded calendar, keep passwords to online learning sites in a specific location).
- Again, try to reduce distractions and disruptions during learning time (i.e., video games, computer games, social media, TV, toys, pets). Make a list of the things that distract your child. Then, find ways to limit them during learning time.
- Identify the behavior that you want your child to engage in (i.e., work for 20 minutes at a time without interruptions).

Together, we can support continuity of learning for our children by encouraging them to take ownership of their work and maintain their successful habits just like they would at school. An effective system for encouraging children to prepare for and to use during learning time might combine any of the above. Depending on the situation, some strategies may be more effective and useful than others. As mentioned in previous messages remember to check vmail and email for appointment times with teachers, social workers, psychologists, and special education service providers. Send an email with “Virtual Hand Raise” in the subject line to the teacher. Teachers are now providing Assistive Teaching times and Google Meet sessions. These schedules are posted on the Teacher Pages of the District website. Please stay updated with important announcements on the District website and instructional assignments through the teacher webpages. I may be contacted at 516-434-2620. I will return your call. Thank you for all of your efforts up to this point.

Sincerely,

Jacob Russum

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