

Assistant Superintendent's Update May 6, 2020

Dear Island Park Families,

I hope this message finds you and your loved ones safe and healthy! Over the past few weeks, my letters have been focused on academic learning. This week, I would like to highlight the other important learning that typically takes place in our schools; social and emotional learning. Social and emotional learning (SEL) is the process through which children and adults acquire and effectively apply the knowledge, attitudes, and skills necessary to understand and manage emotions, set and achieve positive goals, feel and show empathy for others, establish and maintain positive relationships, and make responsible decisions.

The Island Park UFSD values the importance of social and emotional learning and we recognize that the core SEL competencies are necessary for effective life functioning. We also know these skills can be explicitly and implicitly taught. For many years, the District has implemented the Second Step curriculum, a research-based, teacher-informed, and classroom-tested program to promote the social-emotional development, safety, and well-being of children from Kindergarten through Grade 8. The District's health teacher utilizes the Second Step Social-Emotional Learning (SEL) curriculum, to provide students with the tools to excel in and out of the classroom. The program assists students in making progress in emotional management, situational awareness, and academic achievement. The Second Step K–5 curriculum provides a framework for promoting our students social, emotional, and academic success, by combining the Bullying Prevention Units and Child Protection Units along with a focus on substance abuse prevention, violence prevention, health promotion, and character education. In Middle School, Second Step helps teach powerful skills and competencies—like handling strong emotions, setting and meeting goals, making good decisions, and forging positive relationships—while building the safe, supported learning environment middle school students need to succeed.

In addition to the research based-curriculum, the Island Park Union Free School District's Comprehensive Developmental Guidance Plan has been designed so that all students in grades kindergarten through eight have access to a certified school counselor. The School Counselor conducts lessons in grades kindergarten through five (.4 FTE), promoting positive social and emotional growth. At Lincoln Orens Middle School, the School Counselor meets with students in grades six through eight (.6 FTE), to provide an annual individual progress review plan, which shall reflect each student's educational progress and career plans.

We acknowledge that the past eight weeks have been difficult ones for all members of the Island Park community, especially our students and parents. We understand that this is a stressful time for students, families, and educators as concerns about the spread of COVID-19 continue. In response, Second Step has compiled a list of resources parents can use to help their children learn the social-emotional skills they need to get through these challenging events. Please use this link below to find new on-demand teacher led lesson videos, SEL activities, and free resources for students and their families; <https://www.secondstep.org/covid19support>

[COVID-19 Support](#)

We know this is a stressful time for students, families, and educators. Concerns about the spread of COVID-19 are growing. Here, we've compiled a list of educational resources you can use to help young people learn the social-emotional skills they need to get through these challenging events.

www.secondstep.org

In addition, the District will continue to use the following tools/strategies to address the social and emotional needs of students and families during the crisis:

- Daily outreach telephone calls made to parents by teachers and administrators; teachers have created a separate block of time for calling and checking in with 4 - 5 students each day
- Daily sunshine calls from members of our social-emotional team members such as the school psychologist, social worker, health teacher, and guidance counselor
- All teachers offer a weekly Google Meet that is fun and geared at relieving children from the distance learning doldrums. It is a way for children to connect with their classroom or core subject teacher(s) and classmates
- The District's website contains a Social Emotional resources page for students and families that include crisis resources, emotional supports, self-care and guided mediation resources

Please remember that our mental health staff is available to provide support as needed by telephone and other forms of telepractice. As we continue to monitor this ever-changing situation, we will provide more support addressing the needs of our students, families and the Island Park community.

We remind you that during the extended school closure, please continue to practice social distancing, take care of yourself and loved ones, and take time for you and your child's emotional well-being.

Stay safe and healthy!

Fondly,

Vincent Randazzo

Assistant Superintendent
Island Park UFSD