

Director of Pupil Personnel Services Update May 21, 2020

Dear Parents and Community Members,

As we continue to move through online learning and remote instruction, this message follows last week's communication related to supporting study skills. Specifically, this week, my message will focus on social-emotional related behaviors that can benefit children and the family as a whole. The following information is taken from The IRIS Center Peabody College website (<https://iris.peabody.vanderbilt.edu/module/c19/cresource/q1/p06/#content>). It is a national center dedicated to improving education outcomes through the use of effective evidence-based practices and interventions.

Amidst our own daily routines and expectations, we must also remember that our children's lives have changed in significant ways. As we know, this can bring on added stress to children and the entire family. By this time, children have transitioned from a structured school day that includes lessons, activities, exercise, and face-to-face interactions with friends to digital learning and virtual means of interaction. As an added factor, children may be worried that family members can become sick. As parents and adults, we remind ourselves to model behaviors and emotions when we are around children. We want to project positive emotions so our children do not feel anxious as well. Sometimes, it can seem difficult to model positive habits, maintain connections with friends and family, and practice an emotionally balanced routine.

Considering this, there are things we can do to help children (and ourselves) during this time. It is important to recognize signs of stress in children. Such signs of stress can include irritability, showing signs of increased attachment or being "clingy," disruption to eating or sleeping habits, arguing or fighting more often with parents and siblings, and not being able to concentrate on schoolwork. However, there are ways to help your child (and yourself) during this time and reduce stress. This can be done by staying connected to friends and family, and encouraging activity. How children react to stress can depend on factors such as age, personality, and changes in routine. We can reduce stress for our children by talking to them, limiting exposure to negative news messages, creating healthy habits, staying connected to friends and family, and maintaining physical activity or recreation.

When talking to your child, it is best to be calm and provide reliable information. If your child is concerned about COVID-19, information can be found at the [Centers for Disease Control](https://www.cdc.gov) or the New York State Department of Health (<https://www.health.ny.gov/>). It is important to discuss practices for staying safe (i.e., handwashing and wearing masks), correcting inaccurate information, talking about feelings and explaining that it is all right to have them.

While staying at home, keeping our routines, and avoiding contact with others, connections with friends and family are helpful. Whether we choose to do this through messaging, telephone conversations, or videoconferencing it is important to keep in mind that such communication

should be supervised. Also, setting limits by establishing rules and times for activities can help balance the activity with daily routines so that schoolwork can still be accomplished. Take advantage of your child's Google Meet sessions with the teacher and other classmates. The schedules for these sessions are posted on the Teacher Pages of the District's website. In addition, it is important to remember to try to build in quality time together as a family. This can be done by having conversations during breakfast, lunch, and/or dinner; checking in between work-related duties and meetings; or simply catching up at the end of the day.

When planning for physical activity, recreation, or quiet time it is important to do so at designated times. This can take place in several ways and can reduce over-excitement and impulsivity in children. If indoors, some ideas and suggestions for activities and recreation at home include having a scavenger hunt, hallway hopscotch, games with balloons (i.e., balloon volleyball); using soft cups or plastic bottles for bowling, playing games such as Twister; or having a "freeze dance." Children may also enjoy playing board games, reading a book, or getting out for a bike ride or walk/hike. At present, you may wish to have your child(ren) participate in the "Pass the Ball Challenge" as described by the physical education teachers on the District's website (<http://www.ips.k12.ny.us/>). As a reminder, if you are getting out, it is important to model and follow health and safety guidelines.

It is my sincere hope that you may find the above information useful. In addition, you may wish to investigate valuable online resource entitled "Wide Open School" which is a free collection of digital learning opportunities. It includes sample schedules, reading and writing activities, art activities, and music. This may be found at <https://wideopenschool.org/>. As always, maintain communication with your child's teacher. If you have questions regarding schoolwork, send an email to your child's teacher with "Digital Hand Raise" in the subject line.

As a District and community, we are here to support you and your child. Remember to check your voicemail and email for appointment times with teachers, social workers, psychologists, and special education service providers. Please be reminded that Assistive Teaching times and Google Meet sessions are posted on the Teacher Pages of the District's website. Be sure to check the website to stay updated on important announcements and for your child's daily instructional assignments. If you have any questions or concerns, I may be contacted at 516-434-2620.

Sincerely,

Jacob Russum
Director of Pupil Personnel Services