

## Director of Pupil Personnel Services Update May 14, 2020

Dear Parents and Community Members,

I hope this message finds you safe and well. At this point, though challenging, many of us are becoming more accustomed to new routines while at home during this time of school closure. Still, we maintain focus on our professions and daily obligations while supporting our children in their participation with school and digital learning. The following information is taken from The IRIS Center Peabody College website at Vanderbilt University (<https://iris.peabody.vanderbilt.edu/module/c19/cresource/#content>). It is a national center dedicated to improving education outcomes with the use of effective evidence-based practices and interventions. Specifically, this week, my message will focus on adjusting to schedules and routines, encouraging reading, and supporting children's emotions in relation to COVID-19.

As discussed in previous messages, there are a number of strategies for establishing positive and productive learning environments. They include setting up routines, creating learning times and learning spaces, setting behavioral expectations, encouraging work habits, and contacting teachers via email with the code words "Digital Hand Raise." At the end of each week, parents may wish to think about what has been successful and what has not. Specifically, adjustments may need to be made with the daily schedule or weekly routine. Also, the learning space(s) in the home may need some changes. "What were the distractions?" "What worked?" If possible, create a place where each child can work. Having a space can help your child stay focused on learning. These types of adjustments can happen slowly over time.

When it comes to learning, we all know that every child is different. Some exhibit a great deal of energy and movement, while others may prefer quiet activities. Some move through activities and work quickly, while others do not and are more susceptible to distractions. Potential distractions include other children playing, TV/music/loud talking, pets, activity outside, clutter in the workspace, and/or electronic devices. It is important to keep in mind that the learning space should be quiet and organized. Reworking routines and environments can take time and several attempts until we discover what works for both the student and the parent.

In addition, as we move further through spring and approach the summer months, you may find some of the following strategies to be useful in terms of fostering reading. Encouraging reading at home will support study skills and help to maintain the progress your child has made since the beginning of the year. Your child can utilize his/her myON account to accomplish this. Some suggestions to support reading at home include:

- Allow your child to choose what to read. Set a goal for reading 20 to 30 minutes each day. He/she might be more willing to read for a longer time if the topic is interesting to him/her.
- If necessary, break reading time into smaller sections. Rather than reading for 30 minutes straight, break reading time into two 15-minute periods. This can be helpful for younger children, kids with reading difficulties, or those who have trouble focusing for longer periods of time.

- Let your child listen to books. Listening to books still helps your child learn new words, increases her knowledge, and helps her understand what she hears. Options include audio books, kids reading to each other, and online videos of children's authors or actors reading.
- Think about reading options which include books, there are graphic novels, magazines, online articles, and even recipes.
- Embed reading in everyday activities. Take advantage of reading opportunities throughout the day. For example, you might read instructions for projects or emails and texts from family or teachers.

Remember that all children are different. What works for one might not work for another. It is important to take time to think about what is working for your child and what isn't. If one thing doesn't go so well, try something different. As always, we encourage frequent communication with your child's teacher(s). Your child's teacher(s) can offer additional support and strategies.

Finally, when talking to your child about COVID-19, it is best to be calm and provide reliable information. Such 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/>). Some suggestions include explaining how to stay safe (i.e., handwashing and wearing masks), correcting inaccurate information, talking about feelings and explaining that it is alright to have them, checking with your child frequently to address any questions or concerns, and limiting exposure to news that may be directed toward adult listeners.

As always, please remember that the District is 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. In addition, Assistive Teaching times and Google Meet sessions are posted on the Teacher Pages of the District's website. Be sure to check the District's website to stay updated on important announcements and for your child's daily instructional assignments posted on the Teacher Webpages. If you have any questions or concerns, I may be contacted at 516-434-2620.

Sincerely,

Jacob Russum  
Director of Pupil Personnel Services