

Assistant Superintendent's Update May 19, 2020

Dear Island Park Families,

I hope this message finds you and your loved ones safe and healthy!

For the students of Francis X Hegarty and Lincoln Orens Middle School, school represents a place of stability, of family, and of belonging. Our role as educators, including the relationship we have with students, has never been more important now than ever before. From the very start, our distance learning plan included daily interaction between teachers and students from among a range of communication tools that included, emails, phone calls, coaching and/or feedback, and many of the interactive online tools already implemented in our classrooms.

More recently, our distance learning plan has included weekly interaction between teachers and students from among a range of online tools that could include audio/video conferencing, and through interactive multimedia presentations using platforms such as Nearpod and/or Edpuzzle. The District is utilizing Google Meet to enable students to interact with their teachers. Since our students and teachers can't physically meet face to face and while students are learning from home, Google Meet has provided our teachers with the ability to connect with students. Teachers have been using this platform to stay connected with students, to create audio/video discussion sections for students to engage with one another and for teletherapy to support students who might be struggling with new skill-building and concepts. In addition, teachers have used Google Meet to support Social Emotional Learning (SEL) as well. It has provided teachers with the opportunity to support students from a distance, allow students to connect with and speak with their peers, maintain a positive classroom culture and provided an outlet for students to share and process their emotions while away from school. Over the course of the last few weeks, we have learned that the audio/video conferencing through the Google Meet platform has many valuable benefits:

- It gives that personal connection that's missing from face-to-face class time.
- It provides both teachers and students with the ability to connect with one another and learn from one another.
- It provides students with the ability to connect not only with their teacher(s) but also with classmates and peers as we continue social distancing.
- It helps teachers to communicate more clearly with facial expressions, body language and intonation.
- It is quick and easy and can be much faster than other forms of communication i.e. email and phone calls.
- It provides a creative outlet for our teachers to connect with and provide students with support as we "reimagine" education for the future.

We are keenly aware that families' routines have been disrupted which may impact a students' ability to complete all of the work prepared for them by the teachers at the time on the schedules. Teachers are supportive and will do what is in the best interest of their students in consultation with you. If you have any concerns, we encourage you to contact your child's teacher using the code "virtual hand-raise."

We know that this school closure is challenging for everyone. Please know that we are here to assist you and your child in any way possible. The District will continue to provide you with timely information on a regular basis, and we encourage you to visit our website daily for updates.

Be safe and stay healthy!

Fondly,

Vincent Randazzo

Assistant Superintendent