

April 28, 2020

Dear Parents

We know that the home–school relationship has always been a cornerstone of our students’ success and well-being. This is true now more than ever. To continue ensuring our relationship remains strong, we have been “listening to learn” as we have moved through the distance learning experience together. We have received feedback from parents and students through a variety of ways:

- *outreach telephone calls* made to parents by teachers on an as-needed-basis; and sunshine calls from members of our social-emotional team members such as the school psychologist, social worker, health teacher, and guidance counselor);
- *follow-up telephone calls* (vmails left by parents on school phones returned by administrators and teachers);
- *parent initiated emails* to teachers and administrators with Subject line: Virtual Hand Raise
- *teacher initiated emails* to parents;
- *dedicated emails for tech assistance* (webmaster@islandparkschools.org and techspecialist@islandparkschools.org);
- *expanded Board Meeting participation* through BoardDocs and WeBex as well as through the dedicated PublicBeHeard@islandparkschools.org email; and,
- *the online Distance Learning Parent Survey.*

We learned three important things:

1. Children miss their teachers and classmates; they want to hear their voices and, if possible, see them.
2. Parents need more assistance from teachers and greater communication about how to be of help to their children.
3. The lack of a school schedule is contributing to a myriad of unmanageable routines at home.

As a result of this, we have revamped both the format and content of our distance learning program beginning this week through May 15. Should the Governor extend the school closure, we will extend our program as well.

To address the issue that children seem to be doing a lot of homework that drags on throughout the day, attached are schedules outlining the amount of time students should be spending in each subject at each grade level (see Attachment A).

We have spent the last few days engaging our teachers in professional development that has focused on use of Google Meet. The purpose of this is for teachers to offer a weekly “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; special subject and support teachers (art, music, PE, Spanish, ENL, AIS, etc) will also be involved in Google Meets. Desktop computers, laptops, tablets and smart phones enable access to the Google Meet. Your child’s teacher will contact you with step-by-step directions for logging in.

We hope that you will provide assistance, should your child require it; but, we encourage you to step away once your child joins the teacher and re-connects with classmates.

(While I know some parents would like our faculty members to be teaching through Google Meet and Google Classroom, this is not possible at the elementary school level. Our technology plan, which aligns with that of Long Beach Public Schools, integrates these tools at the middle school level only. We are planning, however, to extend Chromebook use along with the Google platform, to grades 3 and 4 beginning September.)

A new block of daily time will be devoted to Assistive Teaching. Teachers have created blocks of time each day in which they will be available to answer your emails (with the Subject: Virtual Hand Raise) and telephone calls as you work with your child (PreK - Gr 4). For students who are more independent (Grs 5 - 8) but may need a little encouragement when reaching out to a teacher, we hope this proves to be helpful time too. As teachers move into more rigorous new learning, we believe this extended period of support should grow in importance and we hope students, parents and teachers learn to use it effectively.

In addition, teachers have created a separate block of time for calling and checking in with 4 - 5 students each day. (The principal will be providing your child's assigned time for the weekly "Sunshine Call" via email with the Subject: Sunshine Call Time. Please watch for it. Because teachers are using their home or cell phones and want to preserve their privacy, they will be using the *67 function, which means you will not see their name if you have caller ID. You will know the call is coming from a specific teacher because he/she will have provided the time to you; and, it will fall within the block on the schedule labeled "Sunshine Calls.")

We will be continuing our district-wide special events. We had great feedback from our school community on the videos produced by each school, the music department video, and Virtual Spirit Week. Our next event will be a Virtual District-wide Art Show. Please share other ideas that you might have with the building principals. We want a well-rounded education for our students and we look forward to providing fun-filled, light-hearted, online activities that will be a welcome distraction.

Attached are sample schedules for an elementary school-level (third grade student, Attachment B) and a middle school-level (sixth grade student, Attachment C) to give you a concrete sense of what I have been describing to you. You will be receiving your child's specific schedule before week's end.

I apologize that the schedules and appointment times for Sunshine Calls were not ready yesterday. However, revamping our approach has been a concerted effort on the part of our principals and teachers. Coordination and training takes time. We thought it best to begin as soon as possible.

I will close by saying it is very important to us that we continue cultivating positive, supportive partnerships with you. This is an ongoing process and one that requires tweaking on a regular

basis. We have worked together for many years and I believe that communication will continue to grow and evolve. I appreciate your feedback. It has not fallen on deaf ears. I promise to maintain our “listening to learn” approach. This is but one step forward in a long walk ahead. We are in this together. And, together we are better!

Best wishes to you and your family for continued good health and happiness.

Sincerely,
Rosmarie T. Bovino, Ed.D.
Superintendent of Schools