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Davis Families:

Happy New Year! I hope your holiday was restful and packed with extra time with your kids and extended family. Of course, there's nothing wrong with feeling a bit relieved to get back in the school-week routine and allowing us to watch your children during the weekdays. ☺

As we launch into 2015, we are sending home today a packet full of information to help you learn more about a number of online instructional resources that are available for all Davis students. Our Technology Facilitator, Ms. Laura Sarago, created for our families a quick reference guide that provides you and your children with information about accessing Dreambox Learning (mathematics), RAZ Kids (reading), Learning.com (keyboarding and digital citizenship), Brain Pop, BookFLIX and more. All of these pieces of online software are available via the Davis School website (<http://davis.nred.org>), and your children know how to go to the **students** tab in order to find the login pages for the software available to them. If they ever forget their login/passwords, the pamphlet Laura created includes this information for you. Feel free to email Laura at [lsarago@nred.org](mailto:lsarago@nred.org) with any questions.

I'm excited that this year our district has expanded use of Dreambox to every elementary school in New Rochelle! I have used this adaptive mathematics tools with my children and with New Rochelle students for the last five years; each year, I have been more and more impressed with how the program has grown increasingly comprehensive and powerful. The software pushes children to develop conceptual knowledge and computational skills all at once—the balance that is required in our Common Core Learning Standards. While we use Dreambox as much as possible in school, your children will be well served if you create a routine of getting them to use Dreambox at home each week as well. I suggest you shoot for allowing your kids to work on their math on Dreambox about three times a week for no more than thirty minutes each time.

More and more of our teachers are also incorporating RAZ Kids into their reading work with their students. Like Dreambox, RAZ Kids is available 24 hours a day, and your children have logins/passwords already. Teachers have placed each child at an initial reading level within RAZ Kids, and as a child reads and re-reads a variety of online text (books, articles, etc.) and answers comprehension questions/tasks correctly, the software adapts and adjusts each kid's level bit by bit. ***RAZ Kids and Dreambox are the central pieces of online software we hope you are able to use at home to support your kids learning after hours. Both programs work particularly well on tablets and iPads, too!***

Additionally, the stack of material we've sent home today includes information for parents with regard to protecting children as they navigate ever-changing technologies and online environments, including social media and online gaming. These materials are intended for you, and are meant to help you launch conversations with your children as you find appropriate.

If you wish to learn more about a variety of topics related to online security and issues, visit the website of the Montgomery County, Maryland, Public Schools:

<http://www.montgomeryschoolsmd.org/info/cybersafety/>

Montgomery County Superintendent, Joshua Starr, has turned his district's attention toward not only teaching cyber-safety but **cyber-civility**. Last winter, he wrote an insightful letter to families after he received a rash of inappropriate online tweets and emails. You can read his letter here if you wish:

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/answer-sheet/wp/2013/12/13/moco-supt-starr-calls-for-online-civility-after-being-targeted-by-obscene-tweets/>

Still and all, parents in 2015 have to be mindful of LIMITING their kids' access to computers and gaming and all sorts of media. Please don't let anything trump time you are able to find to simply hang out and play with your kids outside. Monopoly, cards, chess, hide-n-seek, playing pretend, connect four, backgammon, drawing, reading, puppet shows ... are still and forever much more important and valuable—especially when shared among a family—than all things related to technology, in my opinion.

Wishing your family a new year filled with joy, learning, and togetherness.

Sincerely,

Michael Galland

