



March 24, 2020

Dear OPS Community,

First of all, thank you for honoring my request to step away from schoolwork this weekend. Everything I have read on “working from home” speaks about the importance of maintaining balance by creating new schedules for ourselves -- finding ways to separate work, school, home, family and, even, individual time. There are several topics that need to be addressed to ensure a consistent message is shared across our community.

### **Planning for Next Week**

Teachers are currently planned through Friday, March 27th. In order to provide staff members collaborative planning time, we will be utilizing modified instructional days this week. Your child can continue working; however, staff will not be available for support during the following times:

- Wednesday, March 25th -- Kindergarten and Grade 5 teachers will not be available from 12:30-2:30 pm.
- Thursday, March 26th -- Grade 1, Grade 4 and Grade 6 teachers will not be available from 12:30-2:30 pm.
- Friday, March 27th -- Grade 2 and Grade 3 teachers will not be available from 12:30-2:30 pm.

### **Virtual Teaching, Recorded Videos, Etc.**

During the school year, we have different expectations for how and what a kindergarten teacher teaches compared to what a 5th grade teacher teaches. Our expectations may even vary by content area. We make decisions about expectations based on what is developmentally and pedagogically appropriate for a group of learners. So, while I know many think the answer is to move all instruction to synchronous Zoom or Google Meet type instruction, the truth is that it is not appropriate in all settings. For example, we experimented with a Google Meet in a 3rd grade classroom as a check-in last week, and the best way to describe the outcome is: It was like herding cats.

Children need to be able to navigate the microphone, know when to mute it, have a structure for participation, etc. We will continue to work on helping them develop these skills; however, having them focus on a math lesson while developing these new technology skills is a lot. Even as I watched the coverage of the NYC schools first day of remote learning, I saw parents sitting right next to students to help them navigate the technology. We are trying to respect the fact that many parents are supporting their child while also working from home. So, will you see more opportunities for your child to connect via different platforms? Yes, some may be small group conferencing after an assignment, some may be a recorded set of directions, and some may be a whole classroom meet.

Additionally, please understand that these new mediums come with new challenges we are working to navigate to ensure safety for our students. For example, we have had instances of students messaging each other with inappropriate and unkind words via Google Docs. These messages are not saved (think Snapchat). The problem is that if we shut this feature off, we lose the ability to do Google Meet. It is challenges and concerns like these that have been part of why we chose a deliberate and slower implementation.

### **My Child Needs More Work!**

Just as in our traditional classrooms, in our virtual classrooms, students have varied ability levels. If your child is a quick finisher, please visit the front of the website for the folder that says, “[Additional Free Learning Activities](#).” Also, the number one predictor of future academic success is how much a child reads. On the front page of the website is a [link](#) from Mr. Mangol for how to access free reading materials. (And don’t forget we have an extensive list of links when you click on [Students](#) on the OPS website.) Finally, I thought about what could be gained right now. What is a skill that often gets overlooked? Keyboarding. Make it a contest. See if your child can beat you! As a teacher, I always said that if a student could type faster than me with the same accuracy, I’d buy them a pizza! Create your own family challenge for math facts, keyboarding, state capitals, etc.!

### **The BIG Message**

During this time as things become more real, when the fun wears off for children, when we may become a little more scared and a little more worried, I ask that you remember that my team -- administrators, teachers and staff -- are continually focused on our students. Our primary goal right now is comfort, security and safety while we work to minimize academic slide. This [article](#) was shared with me recently, and it sums up a lot of what we are all experiencing (while the beginning part is about teaching, the second part speaks to parents). We need to continue to realize that we are doing something for the first time and our paths will keep changing. As we continue on this journey, I ask the following:

- Be patient with yourself and others.
- Be kind to yourself and others.
- Have faith that our community will continue to move forward together.

Sincerely,

*Megan N. Bozios*