

FROM THE DESK OF Phyllis Alpaugh



SUPERINTENDENT'S NEWSLETTER

Rockaway Borough Schools
April 2020

WHILE OUR BUILDINGS ARE CLOSED, PROGRESS STILL CONTINUES REGARDING OUR REFERENDUM PROJECTS

[CLICK HERE TO GET AN UPDATE ON HOW THE DISTRICT IS CONTINUING TO MOVE FORWARD WITH THE REFERENDUM DURING THE PAST MONTH](#)



Dear Parents and Families,

Could you have ever dreamed a month ago that we would be where we are today? Even though we had seen the events around the globe unfolding regarding COVID 19, I would never have predicted such a rapid progression in what has now become our daily norm especially in regards to the way we are delivering instruction through distance learning. So as we embark on this journey, please know we are in it together. There will definitely be many unknowns and times when we all need to take a step back and figure out our next step together. While education is at the heart of our mission, the most important thing right now is keeping connected with your children and in doing so, making sure that we address their social emotional needs as well as you during

our time away.

In setting up our Distance Learning Site, we have taken the same approach. While our grade level folders contain daily as well as weekly instruction, we have taken a tremendous amount of time to include a myriad of resources that we hope will help support you and your children during the closure. From specific Parent Resources to the Admin Daily Dose, we have a little bit of everything including medical information from our Nurses, counseling support from our Guidance Counselors as well as Brain Breaks, Technology information and even an Art Corner. Based on feedback from you, your children and our own staff, we have already updated and revised the platform as well added additional resources with the hopes of facilitating learning and make the entire process easier for everyone.

Finally, and most importantly, please know we are here for you and, that we are confident that if we work together, we will get through this as we are all in this together.

Please stay healthy and safe.
Phyllis Alpaugh

[For more information regarding these or other topics, feel free to contact me at pa@rockboro.org](mailto:pa@rockboro.org)

This issue's FEATURED ARTICLE... Tips for Surviving Distance Learning in your Home

Families across the country as well as right here in Rockaway are experiencing a new norm in education as a response to the onset of the Coronavirus and the unprecedented closures of schools everywhere. While we have talked about virtual learning for years, local districts were thrust into the transition relatively overnight due to the rapid spread of the virus and the hopes of keeping students, their families and the staff safe and healthy by closing buildings, but continuing learning virtually.



So what exactly is distance learning? By definition, students are educated with limited or no in-person contact with instructors or peers. With distance learning, students often learn in the comfort of their own homes usually due to a response to a unusual health or social situation. Learning in this manner is very individualistic, and can and may be delivered in a variety of methods including online platforms, webinars, videos, audio recordings, etc., or through traditional methods using workbooks, textbooks and paper and pencil materials.

For many of you, like many of our own staff, the idea of transitioning to distance learning for our children has definitely been a learning experience that we are all adapting to on a daily basis. Whether you are working from home yourself or still continuing to work outside of the home, we understand how your personal challenges may affect the way you are approaching home instruction and its resulting distance learning. With that said, please know that our aim in the district is to support you during this endeavor by keeping you and your child(ren) engaged and connected as well as providing you with effective resources and means to help you keep everyone in your home hopefully healthy, safe and sane.

In the past few weeks, I have read dozens of articles and watched as many webinars, so I decided to put together some tips that may assist you during this new phase of learning at your house. While many are general in nature and directed more towards families with younger students, hopefully, there are some suggestions below that you can use to help maintain continuity of instruction for your children as well as support your family's personal health and well-being during this critical time.

Distant Learning Tips for Your Home

Create an optimal learning environment:

- Pick a shared family space so you as a parent are accessible to monitor children's progress
- When setting up the family "learning zone", make sure everyone has the same expectations
- Have resources/materials accessible such as markers, paper, pencils, rulers, etc. that might be needed so your child can be successful in completing targeted assignments. Now that our lessons are being posted for one week at a time, preview the coming days to see you have what might be needed for each day and always check for daily revisions.
- Also ensure proper desk/table and ergonomic seating that allows your child(ren) to comfortable during learning

Begin and End each day with a check in:

- Start and finish each day with a simple check-in with your child(ren) of what's to be accomplished daily and then review your accomplishments at day's end.
- Submit the daily attendance form
- Look at the grade level templates on the district Distant Learning Site to review the daily assignments
- Besides tackling core academics (ELA, Math, Science and Social Studies), decide which Special area subjects you may want to complete as well
- Take advantage of teacher virtual office hours (8:30am-11:30am and 12:30pm-1:30pm) to reach out to staff if you have any pertinent questions.
- If possible have conversations throughout the day
- Have conversations either first thing in the morning or throughout the day that will help guide students regarding their time and possible needs.

Routines and Expectations for Learning at Home:

- Set regular hours for learning. If possible, align these hours with the school and when your child(ren) are most attentive as these may be different for all children dependent on their age.
- Create a schedule for each child that not only involves their academics, but also their break for snacks, exercise, outdoor movement or playtime.
- Just like cell phones are kept in backpacks or in the locker at school, you may want to keep cellphones away from the learning area during virtual instruction hours.
- In addition, maintain regular sleep routines and wake up time.

Encourage Exercise:

- Encourage your child to move and exercise daily
- Plan regular opportunities to get up and move around
- Go outside and play or encourage your child(ren) to do something helpful like organized a drawer, fold the clothes, clean up their rooms, etc.

Support their Learning Socially:

- Distance learning opportunities may involve collaborative group assignments and social interaction online with other classmates or colleagues
- Encourage your children especially older ones to take advantage of a teacher's virtual office hours as well as other group learning activities such as Google Hangout or Zoom that involve the teacher as well as other students
- Again, always check in with your child about what they learned, how they learned it and with whom

Maintain Social Opportunities:

- If possible, plan times your children can virtually interact with others
- At the same time, monitor your children's social media use and presence as screen time increases during the closure and social distancing

Responsible Use of Technology:

When completing work online, joining video calls, or participating in virtual discussions, stress the following guidelines with your children:

- Use respectful language
- Stick to appropriate topic discussions
- Send only appropriate video transmissions
- Use only appropriate icon, emoji and avatar submissions
- Wear school appropriate clothing if attending meetings via video
- Be honest and use academic integrity by not plagiarizing or copying other's work
- Don't falsify information about oneself or impersonate others online

Create a Support Network:

- If you are parent who must continue to work, reach out to someone in your neighborhood or circle of friends who might be able to look after your child(ren)
- Consider setting up rotating schedule with friends or neighbors to share teaching and supervision responsibilities
- Reach out to a "tech savvy" friend or relative who might be willing to help or teach others about tools being utilized
- Take advantage of an older sibling or relative who might be to support the learning of younger students

ROCKAWAY BOROUGH SCHOOLS www.rockboro.org



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