



CST CHATTERBOX

Disability Spotlight:

Virtual Learning has become the new platform for learning in 2020. Here are some tips to help keep students and families focused throughout these unexpected times.

What can help kids' anxiety from being online all day?

Keeping video cameras on is one way teachers try to ensure kids are paying attention and not beaming out to play video games, but not all kids react well. Discuss anxieties with teachers to work out solutions — for instance, your kid might not need to keep their head in frame at all times. If a child definitely needs to be on screen, practice being on video calls with family members, said David Anderson, a clinical psychologist at the Child Mind Institute. Exposure to the scary situation helps children get used to it. Kids frustrated by having to sit in front of a computer all day and missing their friends may act out, sighing loudly or disobeying the rules, Anderson said. Try to come up with coping plans — offer breaks and activities

they enjoy in return for participating in virtual school. For older children and teens, give them room to do the activities they love independently. “Remind them what they’re working toward and what they can look forward to,” Anderson said.

Check in on your kid and make sure they take breaks.

Johnsen recommends random, periodic check-ins to make sure kids are paying attention. If possible, parents can also have kids in the same room where they work, making sure everyone stays on task.

“Checking in on them is a key on that, and then if they’re unfocused, redirecting or asking them to mute and ask what they need,” Johnsen said.

DeFrates said stepping away from all screens is also helpful. In her home, she has a corner of the room dedicated to Legos for when her kids are free. “You kind of have to have things prepared ahead of time so that kids are able to have these nonscreen activities,” DeFrates said.

Because kids are sitting in chairs for so long, Johnsen also recommends getting

physical activity in. “If you sit there too long, without some physical activity, you’re going to start zoning out. Usually, kids are walking between classrooms and socializing between classes,” Johnsen said. A run around the house may keep kids awake and engaged.

Put nonlearning devices away!

Both adults and children may feel the urge to pick up a device just because it’s around. “Our devices are addictive and designed to be that way,” said Dr. Megan DeFrates, a clinical associate of pediatrics at the University of Chicago Comer Children’s Hospital. “They’re designed in a way that we get a little dopamine boost, a little hit when we get a like or a notification.” DeFrates said families should have phones “out of sight and out of mind.”

Fall 2020

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THANK YOU PARENTS/GUARDIANS/STUDENTS

The Child Study Team would like to express our sincerest appreciation to our parents, guardians, and students for all you are doing as we deal with the reality of virtual and hybrid instructional schedules. Managing an educational experience is not an easy task under regular scheduling circumstances, and all of you are part of the monumental task of supporting learning beyond the walls of the school building at this time.

The Child Study Team understands that families may be dealing with difficulties related to other needs as well. The CST is very thankful to our all of you for your cooperative efforts, your flexibility and your patience.

Thank you for your efforts to support community services, and thank first responders, doctors and nurses. Thank you for reaching out to teachers, aides, and administrators with expressions of gratitude. Thank you for helping your children participate in virtual school wide activities.

We truly are grateful for all of you and your acts of kindness!



Community Resources!

Fall Enrichment Program

Family Intervention Services, A Division of
Center for Family Services

Thursday, October 29 @ 6:30 PM (Weekly)

OPS is excited to announce the 2nd virtual group of the year. Participants must be covered under Medicaid insurance. Participants should be between 10-14 years old. The group will begin on October 29 and will run for 6 weeks. Sessions are from 6:30 - 8:00 pm on Thursdays. The group will focus on feelings identification, conflict resolution and anger management skills. Each session will incorporate self-care/mindfulness activities. Referrals can be submitted to:

Outpatient@centerffs.org or
natalie.contreras@centerffs.org

862-272-2221.



Teen Girls Support Group

Held every other Friday at 5 PM
For Ages 13-17
\$50 fee per session

Starting 9/25 and ending 12/4
17 Davis Road
Sparta, NJ

Call/Text Chrissie Rowe
973-903-9229 to reserve your spot!

For Corona Virus Updates and Resources:

<https://www.morrissexresources.net/news-events/news/coronavirus-updates-and-resources/>

Caring for children and adolescents with autism during COVID-19

APA and Autism Speaks present a webinar designed to help parents and caregivers of children and adolescents with autism connect with each other as they continue to navigate life during the COVID-19 pandemic.

<https://www.apa.org/topics/covid-19/children-adolescents-autism>

Pandemic Parenting Strategies Counseling Support Services, LLD

Join our weekly Zoom every 1st and 3rd Thursday. Counseling Support Services invites black parents and guardians to learn and discuss strategies for supporting children during the era of COVID19, race based stress, and beyond.

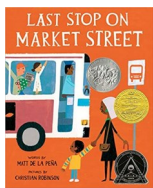
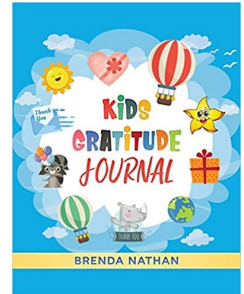
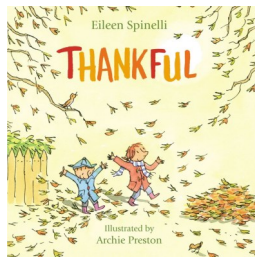
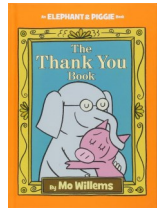
Register for free at:
<https://www.eventbrite.com/e/pandemic-parenting-strategies-tickets-115572631853>

Reading to Promote Family Bonds & Gratitude

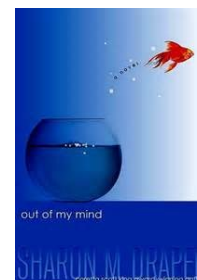
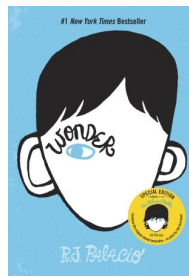
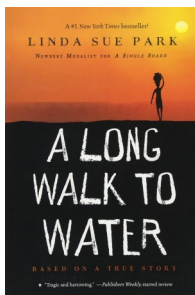
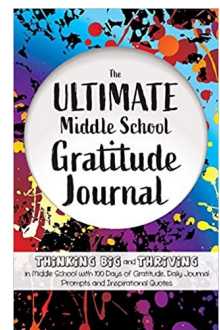
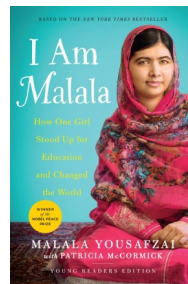
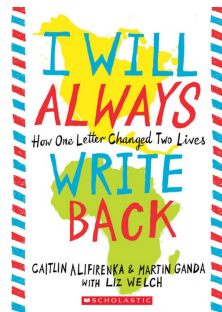
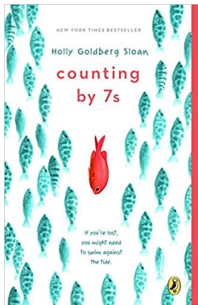
We all know that reading to our kids, or reading with them as they become older, can instill and promote a host of skills and values. Did you know that reading to your children, even as newborns, can help build their vocabulary? Also, discussing the pictures in books at a young age will help your children pick up on visual clues that will even help build emotional competency later on (“Look at her face, how do you think she’s feeling?”). Reading a book with your child can encourage family bonding and conversation as you discuss the conflicts and resolutions in the stories. In addition, reading the same story with your child will give you something to bond over or relate to together. (e.g., sharing your experiences of the characters, plots, etc.). Try a family book club!

As we near the holiday focused on giving thanks, here is a sampling of books related to feelings of gratitude.

Elementary Age



Middle School Age



Shared Services Child Study Team

Wharton Borough Schools
973-361-3010

Mine Hill Township School (CAS)
973-366-0590

Rockaway Borough Schools
973-625-8601



The Shared Services Child Study Team has made it a goal to increase communication and Special Education knowledge with parents as well as teachers and administration within the three school districts. As part of this goal, you will now be receiving newsletters from the team three times a year filled with information on special education practices/law, community resources, special needs tips, etc. We hope you find this helpful!

Leslie Mozulay, LDTC
Stephanie Dzikowski, LDTC
Stacy McCoy, School Psychologist
Brooke Hanenberg, School Psychologist
Armi Clancy, School Social Worker

Get to Know Your CST

Michelle is an occupational therapist, from the P.G. Chambers School, and enjoys working with the amazing students at the Canfield Avenue School in Mine Hill. "The warm, caring and collaborative environment for staff and students at the school is wonderful and it is a pleasure to be a part of the team," said Michelle.

Prior to starting her career in occupational therapy, Michelle received her Bachelor of Arts in Psychology from Rutgers University and worked in a research lab at the University. She also volunteered at a hippotherapy farm where she quickly realized she wanted to



Michelle Retkwa
Occupational Therapist
working with the students
at the Mine Hill Township
School District

pursue a career in occupational therapy.

Michelle received a Master of Science in Occupational Therapy from Kean University and then started her career as an OT working in schools. Michelle continues her ongoing professional development expanding her expertise in areas such as: handwriting, reflex integration, and assistive technology.

In her free time, Michelle enjoys hiking, kayaking, and camping with her family and friends. Her spunky cat, Peanut, and loving dog, Kadie, keep her busy. Michelle is looking forward to helping students continue to expand their abilities and reach their potential.