

August 26, 2020

Dear Parents of GDS Students,

Day two of the 20-21 school year! It is the most strange start to a school year ever. We want our students back in our building!!! That being said, life is what it is, and for now we know our students and our staff are doing what is best for our community. So virtual learning it is!

We are happy to report that day one and two had a few issues, but overall we are extremely excited to get off to a positive start! I am so impressed with our staff, this has truly been a challenge, and so many individuals have worked tirelessly to put together a starting point for our students and families. The commitment that our teachers have to our students, parents and community is truly amazing.

In week one, our priority is building relationships with our students and families. We know that all families have various needs right now, by meeting one on one with you, we can learn how to best help you and your learner(s). I hope the meetings have been productive, and that you have felt heard and understood. The other goal of this week was to start to get everyone comfortable with our technology upgrades. We have just rolled out SeeSaw for 5th grade and Canvas for 6th, 7th and 8th. This learning management system is new to all of us, it takes some time to learn, but in time it will be efficient for everyone(they promise me :))

Next week starts our first week with the full schedule. I am confident that teachers have shared schedules and have talked through them with you. If you have any questions please direct them to your homeroom for 5th grade or advisory teachers in 6, 7 and 8. I will always do my best to answer questions as well!

This week we did a test run of attendance. Next week we will start contacting home if a student is missing and that we do not have scheduled to miss school, just like during a face to face school year. Please email in or call in pre-planned absences. We understand that family situations may make it difficult for students to attend at times, and we want to work with you, so please just stay in contact with us.

If you have technical difficulties please remember to email helpdesk@mgschools.net that will be the way your situation will be fixed the quickest.

We have talked about how important it is for students to get into a routine. To have a place to study and take their classes, have their materials, etc. If you need help with materials or supplies please let us know, we will do our best to help all students.

In the first two days, teachers have noticed that students are very excited to see each other! They are enjoying time to connect with each other and with their teachers. Something for parents to consider, when students are busy with classes, if their cell phone could be put away,

it would be beneficial. We have students keep cell phones in their lockers at school, but yesterday it was quite noticeable that students were “multitasking” during their classes. We would appreciate your help on this issue!

When students have music classes they are required to sign into music classes. When they have guided study, they are not required to sign in. Students are strongly encouraged to use this time as a study hall to get work done, if they do not have work they should read for at least 20 minutes. If students need help, they should sign into guided study so their teacher can help them. The teachers will have a link for each guided study and the teachers will be available to students during this time.

To end this week’s correspondence I would like to thank many wonderful people! First off, our teachers and student services staff: for doing such an amazing job during such difficult times. We are all learning new things each day in order to make learning accessible to the majority of our students. Secondly, I would like to thank our Dean of Students, Nate Verhage and Associate Principal, James Kamoku. They led distribution last week. They organized our group of EAs and SEAs to gather, collect and bundle items for each student, we have over 900 students. Then on an extremely hot and sunny day they worked with our EAs and SEAs from Noon to 7:30 PM and distributed over 800 devices and other various items to family cars. A huge, essential job, well done. So thank you James, Nate, EAs and SEAs! Thirdly, I would like to thank our office staff. Kim, Dawn and Jessica, our administrative assistants have created and changed schedules, handled numerous phone calls from teachers, parents and students. They were all very involved in distribution, they have also worked tirelessly to get this school year started. Last, but not least, I would like to thank you; our parents and families. For reading our many messages and emails, for being patient during distribution, for asking the right questions, for asking for help, for understanding that not everything would be perfect in the first few days, and for helping your son/daughter get up, get connected, and get on board with Virtual Learning 2.0. We know this is not easy for anyone, but we all know that educating our youth is essential and that now more than ever, it takes a village. Thank you for working with us and not against us. Thank you for having Grace and for taking the time to tell us we are doing a good job, we needed that and we appreciate every positive word.

If you have questions please do not hesitate to call me at 608-839-8408, I will return your call as soon as possible.

Thank you!

Kris

Kristen R. Langer, Principal