



DMS Newsflash

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DMS Moves to Distance Learning

Dear Parents & Guardians,

As we embark on our journey to distance learning to help prevent the spread of the coronavirus, we wanted to offer you some tips and guidance to help make learning go as smoothly as possible for your children. We certainly recognize that we are all facing challenging times with concerns about the pandemic and the stress of changing our daily routines and work/school environments. While we are asking you to support your child's learning, we realize that parents may also have work obligations and additional family commitments during these times. Family engagement is critical to the success of distance learning. We cannot do this without your support and timely, ongoing communication. Your child's teachers, our mental health staff, and school administration are here to help you. Please reach out whenever necessary.

Our learning situation may not be perfect, but we strongly feel that our platform can be engaging, meaningful, and clearly aligned with the grade level curriculum that we provide our students. Here are some tips and general information for parents that will help make distance learning go smoothly for your child:

- 🍏 For the most optimal learning environment for your child: provide a routine, provide a quiet and organized workspace, get your child some earbuds or headphones, ensure your child has the necessary supplies, check-in and monitor your child throughout the day, and reinforce your child for his/her hard work.
- 🍏 This is a different way of learning! Please know that we are not expecting our distance learning to exactly replicate what students would have done in their classrooms each day. Teachers will provide a balance of learning experiences - online and offline. Online opportunities will be recorded for later viewing in case a student is not able to attend. In addition, students will work independently of their teacher and class.
- 🍏 The teacher's work day will run from 8 A.M. to 3 P.M. each day. Please note that this does not mean that teachers will be on their devices the entire time. There will be a balance between online and offline work for teachers and students. We recognize each teacher, student, and family will have different needs and challenges structuring their own work day and supporting learning for their children at home. Please refer to your child's teachers for their online hours.

What's Inside

1

Greetings from the Administration

2

Nurse's Note

3

DMS WISH... at Home

4

Family Bucket

5

Get Psyched

6

Specials Update

CONTINUED

ADMINISTRATION, CONTINUED

- 🍏 In regards to attendance, daily learning opportunities are available with flexibility so that students may work on assignments at a time that is convenient for them and their families. Attendance will be accounted for by task completion, not by logging in each day. We kindly request that all student work assigned over the week is due by 3:00 P.M. each Friday.
- 🍏 As we navigate this new learning environment, there are bound to be glitches. We ask that you be patient and allow our Stonington learning community to adapt to this new way of learning. Teachers are working very hard to learn new platforms and support all students in virtual classrooms. Please know that we all have the best interests of students in mind, and we will do our very best to address issues as quickly as possible.
- 🍏 Please visit the district's website to access tutorials on *Google Classroom*, *See Saw* and many other resources if you need additional assistance.
<https://www.stoningtonschools.org/family-resources/covid-19-information>

We will continue to adjust and acclimate to support our students and provide optimal learning opportunities throughout this situation. We are in this together and our teachers and staff are here for you!

Stay well,
Jenn & Tom



Nurse's Note

For families who need to make contact with the nurse, please email Nurse Tavares at DMSnurse@stoningtonschools.org and she will respond to emails within 24 hours on scheduled school days.



Students + Teachers + Families = DMS Community



Working together...
We're all in this together!



DMS WISH... At Home

Dear Families,

We are sure that many of you have heard about being a bucket filler and fulfilling the *DMS WISH* throughout the school year.

To help keep the bucket filling going while we are not physically at school we would like to share some tips, tools and resources to continue bucket filling at home! Our plan is to use the buckets that are filled at home toward our bucket filling challenge when we are back at school.



Bucket Filling Language

- 🍏 Bucket fillers- people who do something kind, helpful or follows the *DMS WISH* which creates positive feelings in those around them and themselves.
- 🍏 Stamps- what we call the squares on the bucket that get filled.

How to earn stamps

- 🍏 Talk to your child(ren) about what it means to be a bucket filler at home and how they can earn stamps.
- 🍏 Anytime someone in your family is caught acting kindly, being helpful, or following the *DMS WISH* s/he can earn a stamp.

What to do when your family has filled its bucket

- 🍏 When all the stamps on your bucket are filled, families can choose to do something special together. It could be anything from playing a game together, making a special meal or dessert, having a dance party, or doing an activity together. Examples from our classrooms include: extra recess, hat day, stuffed animal day or pajama day.
- 🍏 Keep the filled bucket and when school is back in session send it in with your child(ren).
- 🍏 Share a video of your bucket-filling reward!
- 🍏 Start filling another bucket!



Resources

<https://bucketfillers101.com/>

<https://my-little-poppies.com/family-kindness-project-have-you-filled-a-bucket-today/>

<https://proudtobepprimary.com/bucket-filler-activities-for-the-classroom/>



We are looking forward to seeing all the bucket filling that happens at home!

See you all soon!

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Printable Family Bucket



A Mental Health Note

Dear DMS Families,

We recognize that there have been many changes over the last few weeks and this can create stress on many levels for children and adults alike. When talking with students about changes that are happening we tend to call this “zig-zags” at school. Meaning that we might be off course for a little while or do something that we were not expecting but that eventually we will be coming back to our routine. Although not ideal, there is a learning opportunity for us all right now to talk about these “zig-zags” and also what it means to be resilient. Being resilient means being able to recover from a difficult situation. We encourage you to talk to your child(ren) about what it means to be resilient when we are facing an obstacle or tricky situation.

Here are some ideas to help guide conversations you may have with your child(ren):

Ask about the growth mindset books that have been read in class this year.

Many of them relate to the topic of resiliency. Talk about what the main character did or said to help them get through a difficult time. Some of the books that have been read this year or in years past include:

- *The Most Magnificent Thing* by Ashley Spires
- *Chrysanthemum* by Kevin Henkes
- *The Koala that Could* by Jim Field
- *Ish* by Peter Reynolds
- *Ungifted* by Gordon Korman
- Our fifth grade students have been doing biography studies on various authors, inventors and entrepreneurs. Ask your child(ren) what challenges were faced by the individuals they learned about and what they did to overcome those challenges.

Acknowledge your child(ren)’s feelings.

It’s OK to have strong emotions right now, talk about strategies that they can use to help calm their strong feelings. Some strategies may include:

- Taking deep breaths.
- Counting to 10.
- Coloring or drawing.
- Squeezing a stress ball or giving their favorite stuffed animal a hug.
- Talking to an adult.

Set a routine for your child(ren).

Include time to play, create, rest and learn. Visual schedules can be helpful in creating structure. These can include pictures or words depending on the age of your child.

Please reach out if you have any questions or need additional resources for your child(ren). We wish you all good health and look forward to seeing everyone soon.

Mrs. R(obenhymer), Ms. M(oniz) and Ms. Noonan

Specials Update

Our goal for the year is to keep families informed about grade level curriculum in Art, Library, 5th Grade Band, Music, and Physical Education, and how they can support their children at home.

Art

Miss Biernacki



I hope everyone is enjoying their first week of distance learning. I know there is a lot to learn and get used to, so thank you for all the family support! To keep art skills sharp over spring break, and to have some fun, you can try out a few guided drawing videos. The website <https://www.artforkidshub.com> posts guided drawing videos featuring a father, who is a professional artist, and his children. He picks a huge variety of things to draw, so there is something to satisfy every interest and hobby! There are videos geared toward different age groups too, I highly recommend taking a look! There are also virtual museum tours on Google Arts and Culture. I'm also loving the virtual tours from the Museum of Natural History, you can find them here: <https://naturalhistory.si.edu/visit/virtual-tour>.

Music

Mrs. McMinn



I hope you are having fun at home sharing the music you're learning with your families. If you are looking for extra things to do or would like to explore a little more over spring break, here are a few ideas for you. Why not have a jam session at home with any instruments you've got! Even if you don't have any instruments at home, use what you have around the house—pots and pans, boxes/bins, uncooked rice or beans in a container, etc. There are also some cool apps such as *Sketch a Song* (composing music), *Rhythm Cat* or *Rhythm Cat Lite* (reading and playing along with rhythms) and websites www.classicsforkids.com (Listen to and discover instruments and more!), <http://listeningadventures.carnegiehall.org/index.aspx> (Young Person's Guide to the Orchestra with a fun adventure game if you have *Adobe Flash Player* on your computer), *Groove Pizza* (make beats), to listen to and make music with. If you are looking for uplifting and fun songs to sing along with, here is "The Singing Space," which is a *YouTube* channel that features music teachers from all over the world singing songs to their students. Have a relaxing break!

5th Grade Band

It has been great reconnecting with band students during this week of distance learning! Many students have sent me videos from their practice this week, and it's wonderful to see them playing again. As much as you are able, try to maintain a regular practice routine. You may find it easier to stick to your child's usual practice schedule (practicing in the evening or before school) rather than trying to play in "band" during their school hours. Find a routine that works best for your family! If your child is looking for other musical activities, MusicRacer.com is a great website/game that allows students to practice note names and fingerings. Classicsforkids.com has lots of great games, too. Whack a Note (<http://artsedge.kennedy-center.org/interactives/steprightup/whackanote/whackanote.html>) is

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also a fun way for students to get more proficient at reading treble clef notes. Feel free to reach out to me at lindsey.macnabrenauld@stonington-schools.org at any time with questions! Thanks so much for your continued support.

Library

Mrs. Anderson-Halbert



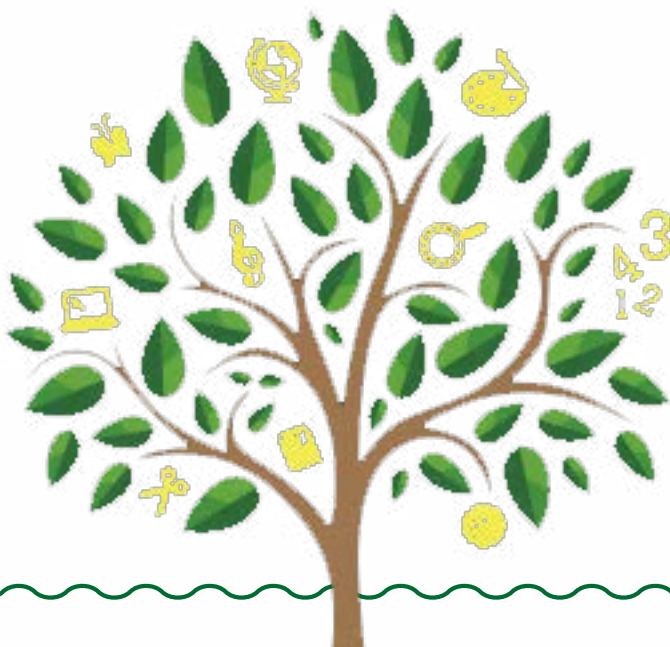
It's been a great week reconnecting with all the students and I'm glad they are liking the read alouds I've been posting! Here are some resources for families who are looking for more read alouds from authors, and some are even doing activities like drawing demonstrations! A lot of authors and illustrators are posting on Facebook or Instagram. so if your parents have accounts, ask them to follow your favorite authors or illustrators. There are also a lot of places to access e-books and e-audiobooks for free! Check out this list of places you can find a range of books. For some, you need a library card, and you can reach out to Stonington Free Library, Mystic Noank Library, or Westerly Library for help. You can apply online for a library card if you don't have one already, and they can help direct you to the right place. All Mystic/Stonington/Pawcatuck residents are eligible for cards at these libraries. Please feel free to reach out to me at kirsten.anderson@stoningtonschools.org if you have any questions about finding books and resources for your child. We are here to help you!

Physical Education

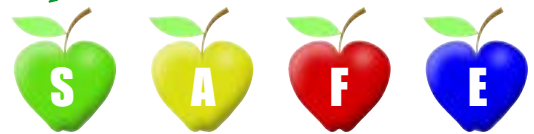
Mrs. LaPalme



Looking for some fun ways to stay active at home? Cosmic Kids yoga is a great way to listen to a fun story while performing yoga poses. Why not create your own workout or race? Have each family member pick a move and see how it forms. A simple and fun way to do a workout is to take a deck of cards, have each suit be a movement and the number will be the number that you do of the movement. Pick some fun, wacky movements for the face cards and ace! Going for walks and exploring the outdoors on hikes are always a fun option as well.



Stay



Stay



We hope to see you soon!