

FIRST WEEKS OF SCHOOL - MESSAGE FROM MR. BRENNER

Hello Frost Families-

This has been a unique and challenging start to the school year. We are all having to take extra time to reimagine how we support our students, both as educators and as families. While we have all done our best to prepare for anticipated needs, I am finding that surprises continue to pop up. I appreciate the support from families and staff for problem solving and solution seeking. We still have tons of unknowns ahead, but by continuing to support one another we will get through this as a school community.

A lot has happened in these first 3 weeks of school. Teachers have met with families individually to learn more about our students, over 400 laptops for students to access remote learning were distributed, and part-time in-person services have started for our two learning centers. During this time construction was completed for our three new portables!

During the first days of class teachers have focused on building relationships and classroom community while also teaching expectations and routines. This is what typically occurs in the first days of any school year, but with school starting remotely our teachers are also needing to create new procedures and expectations to address the needs of online learning. While most students have experience with basic expectations for working in a group setting, most do not have experience doing this online. As a result, students may need more explicit instruction to make the connection between what they know about learning in person to what they will need in order to be successful online. This will likely be an ongoing process, as we are all making new connections. I'm sure that many parents who are themselves working remotely can relate, as our working environments and routines have also had a major make-over.

One thing that is important to keep in mind is that while the environment and tools used for attending school are different, the core expectations and goals remain the same. Students should be prepared each morning to attend and participate in school activities and they should be kind, safe, and respectful when working with classmates and teachers.

Now that remote learning is up and running, I wanted to take some time to review some considerations for helping your student to be successful when learning online.

Create a Student Work Space

In a typical school environment, families prepare students each morning for school by making sure they're up on time, energized with a healthy breakfast, and dressed and ready with their supplies and completed assignments for school when the bell rings. The same holds true for remote learning. Instead of being lined up and ready to enter the classroom with backpacks, they should be dressed, sitting up and logged in with a charged or plugged-in computer to join classroom check-ins each morning at 9:20. Please help your student by developing and reinforcing morning routines so that they are ready to learn each morning.

One thing families can do to help their students is to prepare a consistent work space. When at school, students have an assigned desk or table with materials either at hand or easily accessible, so doing our best to provide similar workspaces at home is important. Whenever possible, students should have a table and chair to work at with as few distractions as possible. None of us

do our best work lying in bed or with a cat on our laps, so while it might be a temptation for students please help them to make responsible choices by preparing space and setting expectations at home. We will be returning to in-school learning at some point in the future, so reinforcing productive work habits is important.

Schedules and Attendance

Maintaining consistent and predictable schedules is especially helpful and grounding for children. Your child's teacher has shared weekly and daily schedules. This includes times when teachers are providing live (synchronous) instruction with the teacher leading whole- and small group instruction, as well as times for independent (asynchronous) instruction that may include online assignments, interactive activities, or instructional videos. Attendance is taken each day, with students marked "present" if they participate in activities and complete assignments scheduled for the day. If your child does not participate in activities or complete assignments they will be marked "absent". If your child will not be attending due to illness or appointments, please notify your teacher and the school so we can document any excused absences.

Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, and Friday

It is important to make time in your child's day to participate in live instruction at scheduled times whenever possible. Live instruction is scheduled every day but Wednesday for Reading, Writing, and Math. During these learning blocks, students will have live lessons followed by time for independent practice. Teachers are also available at this time to help students with questions and to provide small group support. If your child misses live instruction they will still need to complete assignments using support materials provided by the teacher in order to be marked "present" for attendance. If you need assistance with this, please reach out to your teacher.

For the rest of the day, students will complete independent (asynchronous) learning experiences and assignments. These include online practice using Lexia and Dreambox, Specialist lessons and assignments, and may also include other content or activities. Teachers are also available to meet with students to answer questions and provide individual and small-group supports, just as they would if students were working independently at school in the classroom. Asynchronous learning is identified in grade level schedules at specific times, but families have flexibility for when they complete these assignments because they do not need to occur "live". For example, Specialists (PE/Music/Library) are scheduled each day from 12:00-12:30, followed by lunch from 12:30-1:30. If it works better for your family to swap those times so your child can eat and play before doing their Specialist assignments, that's fine. Families can adjust schedules to meet their situations as long as students are completing their daily assignments.

Wednesday

Wednesdays are a day for students to participate in independent asynchronous work and to connect with teachers for progress monitoring and relationship building. Teachers do not provide live lessons on Wednesdays, but students are still responsible for completing any assignments and to connect with teachers through scheduled class meetings, small-group instruction, or other check-in activities. Attendance is taken on Wednesdays, with students marked "present" if they participate in asynchronous learning, connect with teachers, and complete assignments scheduled for the day. If your child does not participate in activities or complete assignments they will be marked "absent".

Technology Supports

Learning new technology tools can be tough for both students and families. It does get easier as everyone becomes more familiar with remote learning tools, but here are some tips to keep things running well and to address some common problems:

- Restart your computer
 - o Restart your computer every day. This is one of the most important routines to establish. Most technical problems with remote learning can be prevented by restarting the computer on a daily basis
 - o Restart when experiencing problems. This is the most effective "fix" for tech problems. If something stops working or isn't working as it's supposed to, a restart usually fixes the problem. Really.
- Use the Microsoft Teams App, not the web version
 - o Microsoft Teams is used for all live instruction and video meetings.
 - o Microsoft Teams works best when you use the App version installed on your computer.
 - o There is a web version of Teams, but it's not as reliable. Common complaints include video/sound issues or features missing, such as not being able to raise hands.
 - o Sometimes when joining a meeting the web version of Teams will pop up. If that happens, click the option to use the installed App version.
 - o If you are having trouble with Teams, check to make sure you're using the App version and not the web version. If you don't have the App, you can download and install it easily:
 - Go online to [Teams.microsoft.com/download](https://teams.microsoft.com/download)
 - Click "Download for Desktop", then Click "Download Teams".
 - Once the download finishes, click "Install".
- Wi-Fi Problems
 - o If you are getting disconnected or the video/audio quality is low, this may reflect a problem with your internet connection.
 - o Restarting your computer often fixes connection problems
 - o Sometimes your Wi-Fi modem or router needs to be restarted. Some are automated to do this regularly, but you may need to do it manually if problems persist. This usually is done by pressing a reset button on the modem/router, using an app to restart, or turning it off, but check with your internet service provider for specific instructions.

If you continue having technical trouble with a device you've checked out from the school, let your teacher know. If they cannot figure it out, you can also check our district technical support page at

<https://www.lwsd.org/fall-2020/technology-support-during-school-closure>, which includes helpful tips and information on contacting a technical support specialist.

If you think you need to swap your computer for a replacement, you can contact our Frost Technology Liaison Angela Martin at angmartin@lwsd.org for assistance and to schedule a time to exchange your computer.

Next Steps

Now that school is launched, our next step is to plan for other events to support students and families. Typically at the start of the year we have community socials, curriculum night, whole-school assemblies, and school photos. Due to social distancing protocols, in-person events are on hold until we are able to safely assemble. We are looking at online alternatives and will communicate plans as we develop them. As for in-person socials and school photos, I look forward to the opportunity to see our students and families together in person, but for now we will need to hold until social distancing requirements and other restrictions to in-building gatherings are lifted.

We will be conducting parent-teacher conferences as scheduled for October 12th, 13th, and 15th, with meetings held online. Just like when in-person, we will be running on half-day schedules that week to allow teachers time to meet with families. Teachers will begin scheduling conferences at the end of this month, so please keep an eye out for more information in the coming weeks.

I understand that many of us are still working through the transition to online learning, and we are all dealing with many unexpected challenges. We are all trying our best, and our teachers and staff understand that this is a tough situation and is impacting different families in different ways. If you are continuing to struggle to support your child's remote learning, please reach out to your child's teacher and we can work together to try to find workable solutions.

Toby Brenner
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