

COUNSELOR CONNECTION

Dru Klein, Janet Goldstein & Jayna Dash

Harry Brown & Audrey Phillips



REFLECTION AND GRATITUDE



It's hard to believe that this week is the end of our first trimester. Throughout this time, it was inevitable that we've learned a great deal. In this edition, we wanted to share with you the most important lessons we learned from our ongoing communication with students, parents and teachers over the course of our time in remote learning. Coupled with our list of lessons, we also share some parenting tips from the Love and Logic Parenting book. We also wanted to highlight the amazing work of our Sources of Strength peer leaders, and their efforts to teach our school about the practice of gratitude, which we hope will make its way into your homes this holiday season. We wish you a happy, healthy Thanksgiving!

LESSONS LEARNED FROM FIRST TRIMESTER

- ◆ **Students need routine**, even in remote learning.
- ◆ **Attendance to synchronous learning time is critical.** In order for students to keep up with their work and to know what is going on, attending class in real time is required.
- ◆ **Learning goes until 3 pm.** Although our remote schedule has students on zoom and “teacher facing” until 12pm each day, our schedule is designed so that students are doing independent work in the afternoons. With access to teachers during their office hours and homework help in between the two office hour sessions, students should be able to complete the majority of their work before the end of the scheduled schooled day at 3pm.
- ◆ **Office Hours are the best way to stay connected to teachers and to keep up with missing work.** We cannot emphasize this enough: Office hours are an incredible resource for students for a huge variety of reasons. PLEASE nudge your students to go and connect with their teachers and/or their classmates.
- ◆ **Students benefit from having a visual schedule**, especially when it comes to organizing their afternoon time. We have an editable template available via this link: [Individual Student Template](#)
- ◆ **Schoology and Skyward are essential tools** for knowing what your student is doing in school and how well they are keeping up with their learning tasks. If you don't know how to operate or navigate either or both of these systems, your counselors can help you.
- ◆ Although we are remote, **there are opportunities for socialization.** We offer a variety of group opportunities, during lunch and in the afternoons. If your child is in need of more socialization, please encourage their involvement. Here is a link to the opportunities available: [Clubs and Activities](#)
- ◆ **Sometimes you may just want to TALK to a human.** Someone is physically at school and at the front desk M-F from 8-3. There will be times when that person may need to step away, but if you leave a message, a human will return your call. The phone number is: 206-236-3413.
- ◆ **Student's electronics should be kept out of their rooms at night** (including ipads, phones etc). Our students need 8-12 hours of sleep each night. Devices should be charged outside of their personal space so they can sleep without temptation or disruption.

If you have questions or need advice related to anything listed above, please do not hesitate to reach out to your assigned Counselor. We are here to support you and your students and are always happy to help.

PARENTING WITH LOVE AND LOGIC

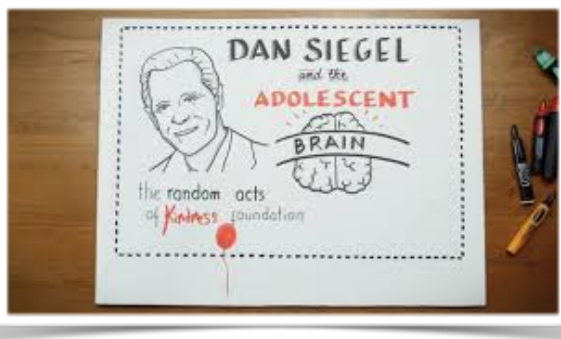
IMS parents, as our students move into trimester 2, we wanted to share information from **Parenting with Love and Logic** to support you in how you are connecting with your child around academics and other responsibilities. If you haven't done so already, middle school is the time to switch to the **Parent/Coach/Consultant** model of parenting. It is not your job to do the work for them, but instead to encourage and coach them with their learning.

- ◆ **Provide guidance and consultant services for your children**, including setting limits on phone use and screen time. Support your children in having a structure for their daily routine. Every **parent/coach/consultant** needs to have the [IMS Remote Learning Schedule](#) posted at home. Use this link to collaborate with your student to create their [Individual Student Template](#). Remember there are learning opportunities until 3pm every day. The school day does NOT end at 12pm.
- ◆ **Model for your children:** How are you managing your own stress and feelings about the state of remote learning and the impact of COVID-19? In the DBT Steps A program, we teach that pain is inevitable, but suffering is a choice. You can use the skill of "Radical Acceptance" to shift your thinking and your child's too, by embracing limitations and exploring new opportunities to connect (albeit remotely).
- ◆ **Make sure your children own the problem, and help them explore alternatives and make decisions:** We don't believe this means that you step back and allow your student to fail. Support them in problem solving and creating a plan for success. Collaborate to create a game plan.
- ◆ **Allow children to experience life's natural consequences:** Don't fix the problem for them. Allow for struggle and discomfort to build resilience. Continue to show up as **parent/coach/consultant** and to support and engage in problem solving through distress.

VIDEO

Check out this video, made by renewed Author and Psychologist, Dan Siegel. He speaks to the idea of reframing how we should all be thinking about adolescence as a developmental period.

[Dan Siegel and the adolescent brain](#)



SOURCES OF STRENGTH GRATITUDE CAMPAIGN

The Sources of Strength peer leaders are running their first virtual campaign this month. We have tried to educate our student body about the benefits of gratitude. We have also asked our staff to share out, on a virtual bulletin board, what they are grateful for this holiday season. Students have also been invited to practice gratitude on a virtual bulletin board, by grade level. If you get a moment, ask your student to show it to you on Schoology! We encourage you, as a family, to practice gratitude and to recognize the various sources of strength that contribute to making a positive difference in your lives.

SEEKING PARENT INPUT FOR OUR RESOURCE LIBRARY

We are working on putting together a comprehensive resource library for families, which will be accessible via our Virtual Office. We are generating a list of helpful books and resources for those who need/want to learn more about middle school, age appropriate topics. If you have read any books or have accessed any content that you have found to be especially useful, please share it with us to add to our list. Email your recommendations to jayna.dash@mercerislandschools.org

