



March 19, 2020

Dear Ridgewood School Community,

The stress associated with COVID-19, school closure, and the many disruptions happening in our daily lives may understandably increase frustration, confusion, and anxiety in our students, staff, and families. Please know we are increasingly aware of the toll this crisis is taking on our collective mental health and want to be sensitive to the growing needs of our parent community, especially those who must balance the competing demands of work, child care, virtual learning, and self-care. To that end, as noted in the mental health section of our home instruction pages, we aim to provide a growing list of resources, suggestions, tips, and information that will help our community maximize resilience and emotional well-being at this important time, and we will continue to update these resources as we learn more. Please reach out to your child's guidance counselor if you have specific fears or concerns.

MENTAL HEALTH: Please see the attached piece written by Lauren DePinto, RPS Coordinator of School-Based Mental Health Services and Crisis Intervention Counselor. Below are links you may find helpful:

Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL)

<https://casel.org/covid-resources/>

Child-Mind Institute: <https://childmind.org/coping-during-covid-19-resources-for-parents/>

Mindful.Org <https://www.mindful.org/how-mindfulness-can-help-you-navigate-the-coronavirus-panic/>

Anxiety and Depression Association of America:

<https://adaa.org/finding-help/coronavirus-anxiety-helpful-resources>

SCHOOL PROPERTY: As a reminder, if you see people congregating on district or Village fields, playgrounds, tennis and basketball courts, please contact the police. The non-emergency phone number is 201-652-3900. Please remind your children that closures and social distancing measures are in place to protect everyone, and it is vital that everyone adhere to the restrictions issued. **Clarification from yesterday: If parents or students go out for a bike ride, walk, or run, engage in these activities as a family. Avoid meeting up with friends or neighbors.**

REMINDER: Please sign up for the Village E-Notice System if you have not yet done so and follow us on Twitter and Facebook.

Sign up for Village E-Notice System - <http://www.ridgewoodnj.net/village-info/enotices-and-alerts-registration>.

Twitter Accounts - [@RwdPub Schools](https://twitter.com/RwdPubSchools) and [@RWDSupt](https://twitter.com/RWDSupt)

District Facebook Page - [@RidgewoodPublicSchools](https://www.facebook.com/RidgewoodPublicSchools).



ANNUAL SCHOOL ELECTION: Today, Governor Murphy announced that Annual School Elections scheduled for Tuesday, April 21 will be postponed until Tuesday, May 12. This will be the Annual School and Municipal Election. Additionally, these elections will be conducted solely via vote-by-mail ballots. The deadline to apply for the vote-by-mail ballot is Tuesday, May 5, 2020. For more information and to view detailed instructions, click [here](#) to visit the Bergen County website. I strongly encourage you to complete your application now so that you have the opportunity to exercise your right to vote.

DISTRICT COMMUNICATION SURVEY: The District Communication Survey is open through March 23. If you have not yet completed the survey, please take a few minutes to do so. Click [here](#) to access the survey.

TODAY'S GAME SUGGESTIONS:

Codenames: Last night, I lost in Bananagrams several times. Send pictures of your finished jigsaw puzzles. Get a complicated one. We are in this for a while.

Other things you can do:

- Keep moving! Time to take the clothes off of your in-home gym equipment. Has anyone noticed that the number of riders on Peloton has increased dramatically?
- How about a "classic" movie? *Dodgeball*. Kind of sketchy humor, but this is a Fishbein family favorite. My wife knows every line. A little history...I inserted a line from *Dodgeball* in all of my graduation speeches when each of my kids graduated.
- Baked goods: Today, I am going with brownies. No adding chocolate chips or nuts. Don't get me wrong, I can eat chocolate chips and nuts by the handful. I guess I am a purist.
- So now all of your closets, everything drawer, and garage are cleaned and organized. Take the day to pack up everything you are going to donate, and call for pick up. Some people have shared what they found in their house. I know we have enough scotch tape in our everything drawer for the whole town of Ridgewood to wrap their gifts next holiday season. We also found mini bottles of hand sanitizer. What luck!
- Remember the Ridgewood Public Library has online resources.
- Keep making phone calls and connecting with friends and family. Google Hangout is excellent. I am not one who enjoys talking on the phone, but this works for me.

Please remember to support our local businesses, as they have always generously contributed to student and parent fundraising efforts. They need our help!

Be well!

Sincerely,



Daniel Fishbein, Ed.D
Superintendent of Schools

We are each one thread of the same strand: The intersection between mental health, parenthood, and education coming to life in real-time

Lauren M. DePinto, LCSW -District Coordinator of School-Based Mental Health Services

If ever there was a time for a universal life lesson on critical thinking and compassion - the time is now. If ever we had the chance to see how important, complex, and interdependent our lives and roles are - as parents, spouses, siblings, friends, employers, employees, educators, administrators, health care workers, community members, and human beings - the chance is front and center. We have been placed into this learning opportunity involuntarily, regardless of age, ability, or aptitude. At school, we often talk with students about “social-emotional learning.” We are now all immersed in a wide-ranging social-emotional learning challenge. We all have our cognitive and emotional skills--shaped by our experience and life histories. Our homes have now become the classroom--but they are much more than that. They are (and have always been) a living social-emotional-learning laboratory where we can learn alongside our children. Let us focus our attention, with discipline and patience, on the pillars of OUR social-emotional health and wellness: Self-awareness. Self-management, Responsible decision-making, Social Awareness, and Relationship Skills.

The world - not just our Village- has slowed down. Pandemics are not new. In the past, other countries have been impacted in the same way. But this experience is new to us and for some, has hit hard. This is a time to reflect on our global citizenship and empathize with those who live in less fortunate parts of the world, those who have been displaced from their homes, separated from their families, whose only learning is in the form of survival. There is power in choice. We can choose to recognize, remind ourselves, and reinforce the control we do have, as well as the resources we have access to, even in the face of such uncertainty, and seek comfort in the fact that we are all coming together and seeing the best in each of us emerge.

As parents, our first role and core strength is teaching. We teach our children as they move through every stage of their lives through the essential bonds of attachment. But, we must remember that what matters most right now and what our children need is our presence. We need to double-down on observing and listening, playfulness, acceptance, and curiosity. Remember children are hard-wired, as are we, to adapt and adjust. Let's give ourselves the time and space to do just that - adapt and adjust.

We can use the concept of “mindfulness” to do what it was originally intended to do. That is, to ground us in the present moment, in our strengths, to pause between stimulus and response long enough to suspend judgment, in order to consider the variables under our control and learn to co-exist with those that aren't. There will be a time this is all over and we will resume our lives. Let us use this time of challenge as a guide to learn about ourselves and our relationships - to cultivate an awareness of ourselves, to take a personal inventory of what lies within us so we can manage what lies ahead of us.