

Dear Center School Parents/Guardians: (Week 1 of remote learning)

(Please have your child watch the video message from the Principal found on the school website, “home instruction” page.) More closure info under “School News” section.

Thankyou parents and guardians for all of your patience, assistance, and support while we have transitioned to remote learning. While you are all very key and valuable in your child’s education under normal conditions, it is now when our children really need increased guidance and support to fulfill their responsibilities as students.

Watching how this first week of home instruction has affected my two high schoolers, it will take increased support and attention to keep them focused. The lack of peer gatherings and socializing while in school, school-related activities, a consistent schedule, and sitting in a formal environment outside of home will take its toll on them.

Please remember “home instruction” calls for a dedicated adult to monitor, and is instrumental in making the program successful. Also, the school website is being updated daily with more resources, and information you will need to assist you.

The staff have been working extremely hard the last two weeks to not only quickly transition to remote learning without missing a day of instruction, but to continue their instruction in as normal a setting as they can provide via remote learning. I believe they have performed fantastically under these conditions and I am thankful their skills and abilities are available to our students every day we have school.

Remote Learning Update:

At this time all schools are closed until further notice. When schools were originally told to create home instruction preparedness plans, mandated by the state, and turn them in earlier this week, the time frame for this unprecedented event was not known. Our school’s plans incorporated a three-week shut down to coincide with our normally scheduled spring break. We planned on three weeks of home instruction (March 17-April 3) and then we are closed another week for spring break (April 6- April 13). Although we were hoping to return to school Tuesday April 14, this fluid health situation has brought many changes in the last 4 days, and as of now will need to wait until allowed by state authorities to re-open. We, like everyone else, are planning on taking one week at a time to focus all our efforts and resources to deliver a high-quality remote learning program.

When we delivered our “home instruction” preparedness plan to the Somerset County School Superintendent’s office on Tuesday March 17, it was examined and I was told it was a very comprehensive and solid plan. I was also told it was one of the best that they had seen up to that date and could be used as a model for others to follow. These comments should be re-assuring to all of you



The Center School is continuing the high-quality academic and related services needs, during this unprecedented event, which your children normally receive by being a part of our school.

Finally, as we are living in a technology-based world and are relying on our laptops/desktops for many routines in our daily lives, our technology is also the lifeline for remote learning. Please direct any technology-based questions and concerns to techsupport@center.school and me at rrinaldi@center.school.

This past week some assistance was necessary. We have fielded many calls and emails to support all of our families while transitioning. We have even made deliveries to houses when necessary. I want to say a special thanks to Mr. Kruza, who has helped me deliver much needed tech hardware.



FROM THE CLASSROOMS:

High School

The first week of Dr. R's online classes was a transition for everyone. Students had to learn how to submit their work so that it was legible, Center School's amazing tech support helped students who could not log in (and possibly one who had malware providing awful popups on his computer), and students started to get used to the online classes. Dr. R's Algebra 1 part 1 class is moving from solving equations with pictures to solving equations with symbols. Dr. R's Algebra 1 class has students working on everything from absolute values to linear and piecewise equations (everyone is working on something different). Dr. R's Consumer Math class is learning about per centages prior to starting a unit on banking.

Finally, her Precalculus class is transitioning back to Mrs. D'Alessandro who has returned to The Center School. In addition, Dr. R held an online parent conference to help a parent who was supervising cognitive training for her son at home. A very busy week for all learning the ropes and learning the new "normal."

In all of Ms. Gonzalez's classes, students have been joining their assigned virtual learning classes via Google Hangouts Meet and keeping track of their assignments on Google Classroom.

In Spanish 1 and 2, students participated in activities where they practiced speaking, reading, and writing in the Spanish language. In addition to using their textbook and workbook, they have also been completing assignments with Quizlet.com, an online vocabulary learning tool, and DuoLingo.com, an online language learning program.

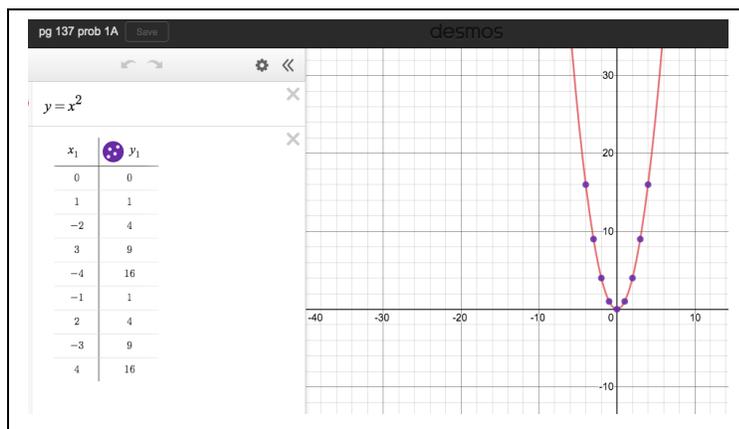
In Spanish 1, the students have been working on the "Classroom and School" lesson. In this lesson, students have been learning classroom- and school-related vocabulary, how to identify classroom- and school-related objects, and how to change definite articles to the indefinite articles in singular and plural form. In Spanish 2, the students have been reviewing the verbs ending in -ar, -er, and -ir, while learning to identify and describe different activities in Spanish.



In English 1, the students have been reviewing the grammar topics of action verbs and linking verbs. Along with using their materials, they have also been completing assignments with GrammarFlip.com, an interactive online grammar and writing program. Students have also been participating in pre-reading activities to learn about the background information and context of John Steinbeck's novel, "Of Mice and Men," including the Great Depression, farming, the Dust Bowl, and the migrant worker in California. Students read an article, answered comprehension questions, watched a video and responded to the video via Google Forms.

Ms. Livelli- Needless to say, this week has been a challenge for all of us, myself included. With that being said, I am extremely proud of my students in LAL and History for preserving through these challenges and navigating into our Google Meet classes. We have been conducting live video classes which have given the students the opportunity to see their classmates, socially interact and feel a sense of comfort. I have met family pets and parents and have given the students the opportunity to meet my Siberian Husky, Sasha. With one week under our belt, I look forward to a productive second week.

Ms. Gibson's Algebra 2 class is using Desmos and Google Classroom to enhance the Distance Learning experience. Desmos is a graphing calculator program that students will use to input their work that was posted in Google Classroom. This is later shared with their teachers, via the same platform.



Mr. Miller's High School History classes have continued their stellar performances on the virtual platform this week. Most students have not batted an eye in the move from the school classroom setting to the virtual classroom setting. Student feedback on the topic of virtual learning has been very positive. When asked what they like about virtual learning some students responded by stating they don't have to leave their bed to learn, they get to eat whenever they want to, and that it won't be too stressful!

Other students have stated that they think it will prepare them for higher education, as most college courses have an online element to them. It is truly amazing to see what teachers and students are capable of when they are forced to adapt to a new environment!

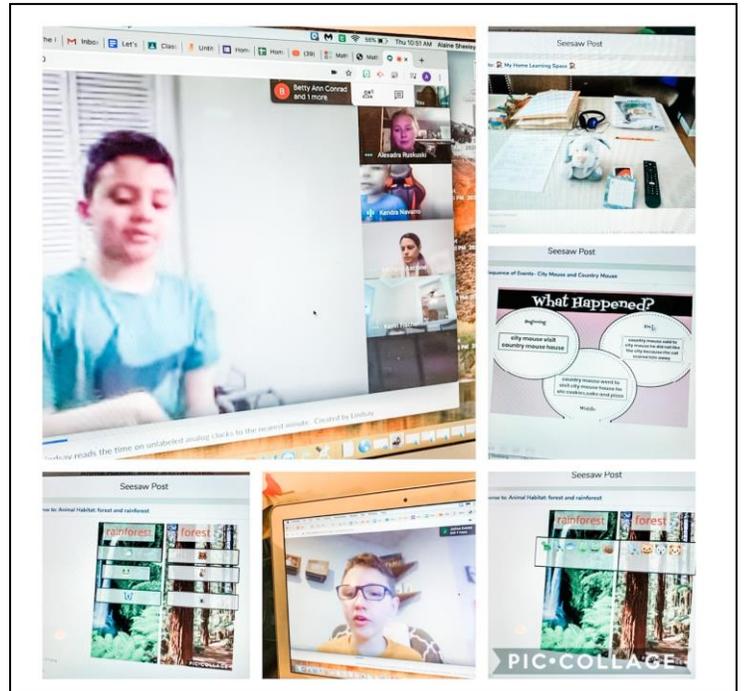
Mr. Leichtling's English classes have excelled in their transition to distance learning. While the change has required adjustments from everyone, they have risen to the occasion. In this new venue, the students have prepared themselves to read Shakespeare's "Julius Caesar" by gaining a background understanding of the real-world events the play attempted to portray. Next week, the curtain goes up and the script begins!

Middle School

The Middle School dove right into virtual learning this past week. Students have been able to view and complete assignments, as well as communicate with peers and teachers regarding the material. Additionally, students have been able to view recorded lessons to help them understand new topics, as well as videos to supplement learning. While this first week has been a week of adjustment and easing into the new forum of teaching and learning, the Middle School staff is extremely proud of the way in which our students are embracing this change.

Elementary School

Our amazing Elementary students and their families have jumped right into our remote learning. The Elementary team already misses physically interacting with your children each day. Students have set up home learning areas and lessons have continued via Meet and we all are so happy to be able to connect with each other via video classes each day. Math classes have played Kahoot and watched Khan Academy videos while our Science class took a virtual field trip to the Cincinnati Zoo to meet hippos Fiona and Bibi. Students have used Seesaw and Google Classroom to complete assignments. Our students have worked through technical glitches and we are proud of how everyone has adapted to our new home learning adventure! As always, reach out if we can help you in any way!

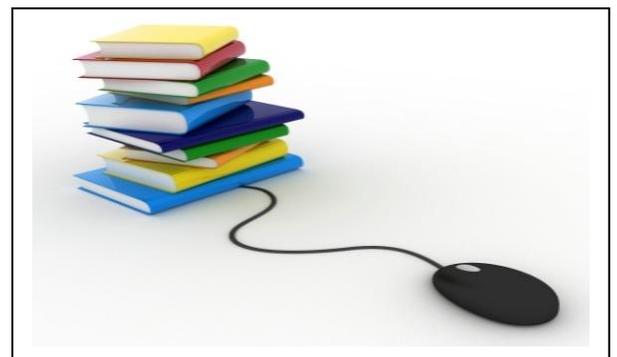


Reading and Literacy Support

Reading and Literacy Support with Mrs. Eachus is continuing with instruction without losing a beat! The Elementary School students scheduled for this week are learning about the characteristics of Fairy Tales. For example, reading along with Mrs. Eachus and/or a parent/guardian, we completed “The Princess and The Pea.” Independent of Video Chat, the students will refer to the text and illustrate two drawings. This is a means of checking for understanding and using the text to locate the details in the story.

High School students are continuing with the projects from school. For example, using the books or duplicated pages that were provided to them for home, shared reading is continued. Students are working with literal and inferential comprehension, vocabulary and the literary elements.

In the Period 6 class, we are maintaining our timeline to complete three research type projects. The students selected from a bank of seven topics the three that were of interest to them. In class, through Direct Instruction, we had researched and identified three acceptable sources of information. For the essay, we created a graphic organizer together, the rough draft, the revision and the final edit. Students learned how to create a cover page to MLA/APA standards. For Remote Learning, students were able to take their folders, materials and computers with them. This week, we reviewed again the rubrics and graphic organizers appropriate for essays, PowerPoint/Slides, and opinion papers.



Speech and Language

This week we embarked on a new way of learning. There were some minor kinks to work out, but it has been a normalizing and inspiring experience to touch base with our students. Reading Comprehension exercises continued from learning about Polar Bears in the Arctic, writing outlines (using the Expression Expansion Tool) for mini biographies of famous people, learning how “Imagineers” designed a way to Blast Off onto Mars, to visiting the Fault Lines in California. Other activities included word study activities from searching for synonyms in paragraphs to learning new prefixes, suffixes and root words. Looking forward to the week ahead.



Phys. Ed.

Moving from our gym to home instruction is a big move, but our students have been doing great. We began a yoga unit for the High School, with a big focus on reducing stress and relaxing. We have started with a few beginner workouts, to get them used to the poses, hoping that they will be able to use these skills outside of physical education.

For Elementary School we have been keeping the kids moving by doing a Pokémon yoga adventure. All the students joined over Google Meet and we did the work out together. We all had fun completing the work out and winning our first Pokémon gym badge.

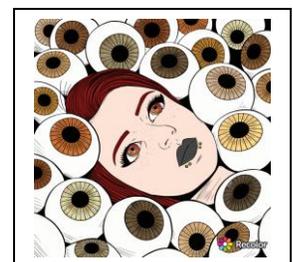
Middle School Health got off to a great start with students navigating google meet like pros. We began our unit on Drugs and students learned about legal and illegal drugs and the effects of it on their bodies. I'm happy to say students have been turning in all their work assigned! Great job middle school!

Woodshop

We had our first Elementary School Woodshop class Thursday. Students were signed in on the Meet and ready to go. They not only stayed on task but helped Ms. Swan with presenting the video. Anthony stepped up and shared the video with all of us along with Gavin and Evan's assistance. We watched and commented on the video together then discussed it afterwards. We had a few minutes left so Anthony shared his own YouTube channel with us. As I said, I was just amazed and also so proud of the focus and stamina that our students showed. Way to go ES!!

Art

Elementary School students drew pictures of cats. The High School and Middle School students started work on shading and line variations as well as their own individual projects.



Music

Well what a learning curve this has been. I must say that it went better than I expected. Elementary students were playing their recorders for me on Google Chat. It was a lot of fun to see them trying their best under these circumstances. While chatting with Middle School, students created 4 bar 4 line rhythms using prior knowledge of note values. They also have extra composer biography assignments to keep them busy. High School students have played the piano for me via Google Meet and others that are taking Music Appreciation are continuing with their Powerpoint presentations and sharing them with me.



All in all, I am pleased with what we have accomplished this week.

Bistro

Since Bistro workers are not able to work in the Bistro, they are learning about additional safety procedures that would be used in commercial kitchens. Although we do not prepare food for Center School students, Bistro workers are now learning about knife safety, preventing burns, preventing cuts, cross contamination and proper use of cleaning chemicals. This will help them prepare for either work in a restaurant or practicing safe cooking procedures at home.

Career Students are learning about jobs in the Transportation, Distribution, and Logistics job clusters. Students are researching types of jobs and then looking for open jobs in the area for their top 5 selected. Emphasis will be on the job responsibilities for jobs listed and the requirements for the job. Students will look at their selected jobs and determine if it is right for them based on established data-driven personality criteria.

Career Exploration

This week Mrs. Ferraro's students began their distance learning focusing on converting decimals to percents. The students multiplied the provided decimal by 100 in order to find the percentage amount.

Life Skills 1 and 2

This week, Mrs. Ferraro's students began their virtual learning by practicing money skills. The students were tasked with identifying coins: when provided a series of coins, the students must identify the quantity of each coin (ex: 3 quarters, 2 dimes, 4 nickels, 1 penny). Life Skills 2 students began their virtual learning by practicing money skills. Students were tasked with identifying coins: when provided a series of coins, the students must identify the quantity of each coin (ex: 3 quarters, 2 dimes, 4 nickels, 1 penny).

Financial Literacy

Students commenced their virtual learning with practicing converting decimals to percents. This will be beneficial when the students continue their taxes unit and will need to calculate tax percentages deducted from their paychecks.

Financial Planning

Financial Planning students began their virtual learning with practicing converting decimals to percents. This will be beneficial when the students need to financially plan and calculate a budget and different percentages they must designate to each budget category.

Therapeutic Dept.

This week the High School counselors held video group sessions and made telephone calls to students to see how they were handling their current circumstances. The majority of students discussed how they were acclimating to home instruction and also finding ways to deal with their new norm. Many of our students are staying indoors while some are taking walks, playing video games, and/or taking up hobbies such as building Lego sets, drawing, listening to music or watching movies on Netflix. We discussed how these were excellent ways to manage any anxiety they were feeling and reminded them we are here to help.

Mrs. Gorski posted a few assignments on Google Classroom for her students to do some self-reflection during this challenging time and has been having online discussions with her students daily. She also reached out to her students for individual counseling this week via the old-fashioned telephone call. It was very uplifting to speak with parents and students and have the opportunity to speak with others to support and hear about the challenges that they are facing. Although these are uncertain times, the one thing that is certain is that we are all in this together and that supporting one another is certainly the way to go. I look forward to continuing to speak to you all in the upcoming weeks. Stay well, be safe and enjoy the time with one another.

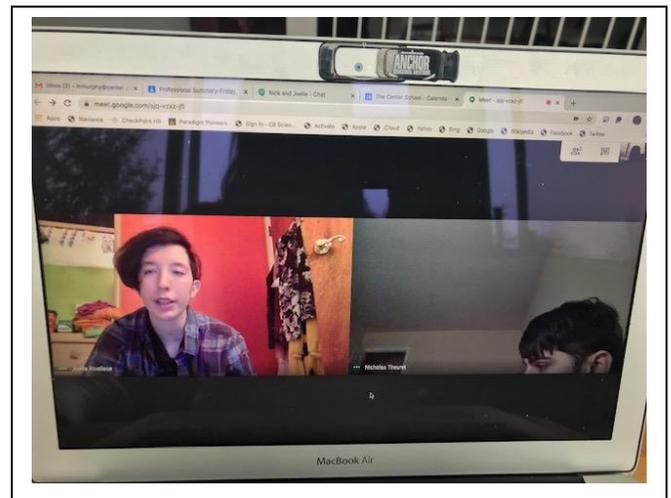
Wellness

Mrs. Marino and Mrs. Schlaline have been busy this week working on The Center School Wellness Garden area!! We are preparing it for students to plant vegetables and flowers when we return to school!! "Take time to smell the flowers!" 🌻🌷🌱



Transition Program

In addition to using Google Hangout for video chatting, the Transition students are staying fully connected with Google Classroom, Google Chat, and email. Students are accomplishing their lessons and discussions with very little learning curve this first week, for a very smooth transition from classroom to virtual.



School News

Important guidance for remote learning:

1. Please visit the school's website for continuous updates and information on the present school closure.
2. Remember that parental and/or guardian assistance is necessary for the remote learning process. Our students do require help to remain focused and on task to get the most out of the shortened class periods during this time. The more they are engaged, the more effective remote learning becomes. Ask your child's teachers for helpful hints. They do this EVERYDAY.
3. If you need support with behavioral issues you can always contact your child's school counselor.
4. If you need support with increased challenges your child exhibits due to this life changing event, and which may require more services than our school counselors can provide, New Jersey also offers two resources that are a good place to start when looking for help:
 - a. **NJ 2-1-1.** This website allows you to search for many types of social services from the state to local level. For best results, select your county as your location at www.nj211.org. To speak to a professional, you can call 2-1-1 or use their online chat service.
 - b. **NJ Helps.** This online state service screens all available state services and programs. The screens will prompt you for household information and give you a list of services you may qualify for. It will also give you a list of local county contacts for all services available in the state. Even if the program says you are not eligible for a service, you should contact the appropriate agency since eligibility requirements may be subject to special circumstances.
 - c. **The New Jersey Department of Children and Families, Division of Children's System of Care (CSOC)** Provides non-educational services for children and youth with developmental disabilities and services for emotional and behavioral health. These services may include personal care, training, residential care and other family services, such as afterschool and respite care, counseling, crisis intervention and medical care at home. Registration forms and information can be obtained on the division's website Link: <http://www.nj.gov/dcf/about/divisions/dcsc/> or by calling the 24-hour free access line: 1 (877) 652-7624. Individuals between 18 and 21 years of age must first register for services with the Division of Developmental Disabilities: <http://nj.gov/humanservices/ddd/home>

More information on these and many other sources can be found at Advocates for Children of New Jersey: <https://acnj.org/gethelp/>



As a historian, I cannot help but compare what is going on today with the first hand stories many of us from my generation have heard from our parents and grandparents about growing up during World War II or living through The Cuban Missile Crisis. Both world events had the world's population not only dealing with the disruption of daily life, resource shortages, and the uncertain future of their children, but more importantly fearful that life could end any day because of either pure "evil" or a red button being pushed.

These stories also included descriptions of how they handled daily life. The sacrifices they endured and made, the bravery they displayed, and the determination to would take one day at a time, adapt, and move forward to get through the hard times. They survived and so will we. This will pass, and we will become stronger with knowledge and learned experiences that the challenges these hard times present us. Just focus on each day and calmly carry on.

IMPORTANT DATES:

Tues. March 17- Fri. April 3	Remote Learning Instruction
Fri. April 3	3 rd Marking Period Ends
Mon. April 6- Mon. Apr. 13	School Closed- Spring Break
??????	School Back in Session

Sincerely,

Dr. Ronald P. Rinaldi
Principal