

DRIVER MIDDLE SCHOOL

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Dedicated and Motivated to Succeed!

April 23, 2020

Dear DMS Parent,

Hello! As we continue with our remote learning and time away from our school building, we want to continue to communicate with you in an effort to share information and stay “connected” as best we can.

It is hard to believe we have been in this learning mode for 6 weeks! Yikes! We have appreciated the partnerships we have strengthened to help make this experience as successful and stress-free as possible. We **continue to value** your patience, flexibility, understanding, and feedback as we navigate this new territory and find our way.

We are now completing the **2nd week of the fourth marking period**. While Mrs. Brantner sent a letter sharing our strategy for grading in the 4th MP, we wanted to follow up with some additional thoughts. All of our teachers are going through a process of prioritizing the content to be covered in the last marking period. Whether we come back to school or not, it is not realistic to attempt to cover what we normally cover but we do believe we can make solid decisions about what is most important to instruct.

An important message we want to give is that the work students do in this last marking period will help them **end strong and be ready for next year**. This is always our goal and not being in our formal educational setting does not change that targeted outcome. The only difference now is this big obstacle of “distance and separation” we have. Our hope is that students will remain engaged, complete assignments, ask for help, and put forth their best effort. Just as students potentially lose a little over summer vacation, if students start to disengage now, the same effect will happen and put more of a gap in their learning between now and September.

As Mrs. Brantner indicated in her letter, we will continue to assess and grade in the 4th marking period in our normal manner. The difference in the 4th marking period compared to the 3rd marking period is that we will not, as a rule, exempt students from assignments not completed. Therefore, it is even more important that if students are struggling or having difficulties that are preventing them from completing their work, they reach out to someone to allow us to offer help and support.

The more important message we want to send is that **we are here for you and your children**. As the time we are apart increases, there is likely a myriad of reactions we are all having. For me, “it” (however we define it) is becoming even more “real” and actually quite unsettling. I had been in a “reactive” mode that just kicked in to do what needed to be done and I was not giving much thought to a “long-term” situation. Now, the length of time apart amplifies the level of concern I have for students, staff, all of you, loved ones, our communities, our healthcare workers and our businesses.

That being said, I have found that focusing on my work and finding ways to connect with students helps give me some normality. I am trying to stay active, adhere to a “work” and “family” schedule, and manage my coffee intake! There is comfort in routine and purpose. I guess that is why I believe it is important for students to find a routine with school....because it is what they would be doing in “normal” circumstances.

We realize and understand that every family is experiencing this in many different ways. There is not any single set of directions or suggestions for how to manage all we are managing, nor is there any magic wand. There is “us” and our ability to be patient, be flexible, and work together to support each other. As educators, we are **celebrating the new connections** we are making with students in different ways, and the efforts our students are making to remain engaged and take on this challenge head-on! *We have been so impressed with your children who have risen to the challenge during this time!*

We are going to hold virtual class meetings on Monday the 27th of April. Each student will receive an invitation in their email with a link to the virtual meeting. We will recognize Honor and High Honor Roll students for marking period 3, birthdays for the month of April, and Positivity Awards. We have a standing class meeting monthly and we thought we would give it a try doing them virtually! Please tell your child to check his/her email or the calendar in the Student Classroom for a link to the meeting. Hope to see them there! Students are asked to only join their respective grade level meetings.

We have asked students to complete a survey to let us know how they are doing and now we would like to host a **focus group of parents** to do the same and give us some feedback on how distance learning is going for your family. We are hoping to have a group of about 10-12 parents with a good cross section across the grade levels. We will hold a virtual meeting to get your feedback on Wednesday, April 29th at 2:00 p.m. If you are interested in participating and available at that time, please send an email to Katie Cook (kcook@marcellusschools.org). Of course, as always, if you have some feedback for us and are not available for the group, you can contact us at any time.

Sadly, given the circumstances, we are canceling our **8th grade trip to Niagara Falls**. These decisions are not easy to make but given the level of planning that is necessary and the inability to predict the future, it makes sense at this point to cancel. It is uncertain at this time if we will take this trip at a later date, but we will keep you informed if new information develops.

Some additional thoughts:

- Students should check their 4-6 or 7-8 Student Classroom at least once a week. We are continuing to make a weekly video with announcements for the week.
- Students should check their email once a day or every other day.
- If students did not get a chance to complete the “checking in” survey, they can still access it in the Student Classroom.
- We will be thinking of some alternate ways to present our parent information nights that we have coming up in the next month. More to come on those events.

In partnership,

