

March 20, 2020

Dear 7th and 8th Grade Families,

We hope everyone is doing as well as possible during this challenging time. We were sad to hear the news today that CPS will remain closed until April 21. We completely sympathize with students who are sad to be missing out on class trips, in-person learning, and other school activities - we are sad, too! We also understand how hard this new transition can be on parents/guardians as many of us are in the same boat. We recognize that students and parents also have many logistical questions about how the rest of the school year will go, and, unfortunately, we have those same questions. This time of uncertainty is certainly stressful, but we are confident that our community can stick together and support one another when we need it most.

The 7th and 8th grade team has been working diligently to ensure that our students are provided meaningful learning activities while school is closed and your family is practicing social-distancing. We have decided to move forward with new learning in all core classes and each teacher has created online lessons, activities, projects, and assignments to keep students academically and socially engaged. The team is using a variety of online learning platforms that are fun, interactive, and provide students with feedback. Experts are suggesting that everyone try to maintain a schedule while we are at home, so we have created a schedule that mimics a normal school day. We hope that this will help students make the transition into successful remote learning and, eventually, make it easier for them to transition back to the classroom. We also think this attempt at normalcy may help to keep spirits up and minds busy. Please see the attached schedule with suggestions for remote learning and some norms and agreements we have established.

All teachers are posting assignments on their Google Classroom pages by the time that their class is scheduled for the day or will post work for the week. Students should check these pages daily. Additionally, some classes have scheduled Zoom classes so that students can interact with their teachers and peers through video-conferencing.

We are already incredibly impressed with the high levels of participation that we are seeing from our students! We recognize that some students may thrive in this setting and really enjoy an online learning format and that others may struggle with this level of independence and self-discipline or simply dislike remote learning. We also recognize that students' feelings on remote learning may change over time as we progress through these uncharted waters. We are committed to supporting students during this difficult time and will be reaching out to those who are not participating in online learning, as well as informing parents and guardians so that you can make a decision for what is best for your family regarding your child's participation. Besides your child's core teachers, Ms. Ansari and Ms. Shah will also be able to provide individual support.

You can help support your child with remote learning in the following ways:

1. Ask them to show you their Google Classroom pages so that you can get an idea of what the assignments look like and how they are being communicated.
2. Ask your child to show you some of their assignments and have a conversation together. What do they understand? What questions do they have? What assignments did they enjoy? What resources do they need? Are they on track for completing assignments? Do they need to reach out to a teacher or peer for help?
3. Help them find a quiet place to serve as their work space. Ask them to turn off distractions and set a timer so that they can switch from virtual class to virtual class.
4. Encourage your child to work on a Passion Project. This is a great chance for them to teach themselves something new that they wouldn't otherwise learn at school and share it with their school community.
5. Please reach out to the team if your child is feeling overwhelmed or needs additional supports. If at any time the classwork seems to be too much, please encourage your child to take a break. Teachers are offering due dates as a suggestion to stay on track, but these deadlines are certainly not firm.
6. If you think your child would benefit from speaking with a counselor, Ms. Jacobson is also available to speak with students. Your child's mental health and well-being should certainly take priority over schoolwork.

Update On Grading: Originally, the state of Illinois communicated that teachers were not allowed to grade assignments given during this statewide school closure. As of March 17, ISBE has now issued new guidance on grading during the school closure. ISBE stated that student work completed during this time may not negatively impact a student's grades, but that schools may allow student work to count during the closure only to increase a student's academic standing. We will be following the state's suggestion and may add some graded assignments if they help a student's overall grade. Additionally, we will be grading assignments completed before the mandated closure (anything prior to March 16) and entering those into Aspen as we find time. Incomplete or missing work from regular school days will be marked accordingly, but we can work with students to make those assignments up. Please reassure your child that we will make sure their grades are not negatively impacted by all of this.

Teachers have already, and will continue to primarily communicate with parents via Remind. Please make sure you are signed up to receive these short messages.

- **7th Grade Parent Remind:** remind.com/join/skinner7th
- **8th Grade Parent Remind:** remind.com/join/skinner8th

Additionally, teachers will be communicating with students via their own Remind accounts or messages via Google Classroom. Directions to register were shared with students through Google Classroom earlier this week. Teachers may use Remind to send students short messages reminding them about Zoom classes or assignments and students 13 or older can

message teachers directly to ask quick questions. Google Classroom will be students' one-stop-shop for assignments, resources, and other important announcements. Students are also encouraged to reach out to teachers through email. Thank you in advance for your patience in responding as we navigate teaching from home.

We are waiting to hear more direct information from CPS, but we will likely need to send you some sort of virtual permission slip to continue using some of our remote learning platforms, particularly Zoom. Please keep an eye out for these in your email.

We imagine that there will be many more updates and changes as we continue remote learning over the next month, and we will keep families updated. Please reach out to us via email if you have any questions or concerns. Also, please reach out to the Skinner North community if your family needs anything over the next month or can offer any assistance to families who may. We hope everyone stays healthy.

Sincerely,

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