



April 2, 2020

Dear Parents,

As we begin day 14 of distance learning, I imagine this week's communication would be better served with a list of questions that have been posed by one or more parents related to what is transpiring today and items we are planning as the uncertain future unfolds.

I hope you are all enjoying the sunshine and are capturing this time with your family through a healthy lens. As a mother of two university students it brings me joy to watch my son and daughter learn and work on school-related projects inside our home. (My mental images of them on campus or in the dorms was quite different!) As we cozy up to the idea of a few more weeks of distance learning ahead, I thought you may appreciate this commentary I recently read on a friend's blog:

College kid: "In history class, we learned that the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 was really bad. What was it like?"

Parent: "Well, everything was shut down in an attempt to kill the virus but not everyone followed the order to quarantine for 15 days so it lasted longer than everyone expected. Many people died who shouldn't have. Grocery stores were out of everything because people were hoarding as much as they could. We were scared of economic failure for our country and for ourselves because we couldn't work. Don't you remember? You were eight."

College kid: "All I remember was the school closing and being homeschooled. I remember doing scavenger hunts in our yard. I remember eating meals as a family for a change. I remember getting great sleep because I wasn't up late for homework or getting up early for school. I remember board games as a family. I remember reading books. Honestly, it was the happiest time of my childhood."

All of us at Erie Day School are embracing this time of change as an opportunity to not just survive. But to thrive.

Yours in education,

Karen

Frequently Asked Questions

When will school resume?

Governor Wolf has issued the mandate that PA schools are closed “indefinitely” due to the pandemic. We will open school when permitted to do so. I have heard rumor of May 4th or June 1st as planned start dates but as you well know, we can return to our Erie Day School classrooms when given permission through our state officials. Believe me when I tell you, all of us at Erie Day School are anticipating and welcoming the return!

Will the student break planned Friday, April 10th through Sunday, April 19th still occur?

Yes. Students have been learning and teachers have been teaching. We will maintain the vacation time as scheduled.

Why are you keeping attendance?

The Pennsylvania Department of Education's (PDE) State Board of Private Academic Schools can call to inquire on how the schools accredited by the Pennsylvania Association of Independent Schools are intending to manage their instructional time and whether we expect our schools to meet the 990 (secondary) / 900 (elementary) / 450 (kindergarten/early childhood) hours of educational instruction this school year. The mandated hours have been lifted, however, PAIS our accrediting body, is recommending that we work diligently to maintain school norms.

In addition to the recommendation, faculty and administration of Erie Day School feel an ethical and moral obligation to educate all of our children as planned with your enrollment agreement for the 2019-20 academic year. Student attendance, through participation and performance, helps us ensure this responsibility. Supporting our students and families through this difficulty time is spread among more than one teacher with involvement from the administration in understanding students are engaged and present in the online classroom.

Our eighth graders will be transitioning into high school in just five months. We need to ensure their readiness; just as we hope to ensure the preparedness of each student

into the next grade. This can best be accomplished by with educational opportunities and involvement each day.

Tell me about parent-teacher conferences.

Parent-teacher conferences are scheduled on April 10th. Sign-ups for the conferences are made possible through GoogleDocs on School Speak. If you do not have a Google account and are unable to sign up, please review the times available among the GoogleDoc list within your child's grade level announcements on School Speak and email mmccaslin@eriedayschool.com with two time selections. Ms. Margaret will assign your name with an available time.

If you are not interested in talking with your child's teacher on the phone or via Zoom on the 10th, feel free to email or call anytime, 8:00am through 3:30pm daily. Just as when school is in physical session, teachers are working the seven and a half-hour day.

Please note there are variances among the faculty in the methods they will use to connect with parents/guardians for conferences. If you are unsure of whether the teacher will place a telephone call or a video call with you, please be sure to review communications that have been sent or email your child's teacher.

Middle School conferences will be held with *individual teachers* this spring. Specific content area/teacher sign up sheets are available through your child's grade level announcements on School Speak.

How will student performance be graded?

In Middle School, the teachers are assigning and collecting work from students. As one teacher commented yesterday, "I have more grades than I ever this quarter." (If you recall, our third quarter was extended in the hopes that we would physically return to school in time to begin the fourth quarter.) Test, quiz, project, and essay grades are updated in School Speak almost daily for your review. The third quarter report card should not offer any surprises to students and parents. If you see an "E" or "I" noted in your child's gradebook, s/he are missing an assignment.

In Lower School, the teachers have also been relaying assignments, quizzes, papers and collecting projects for students to complete or perform. Each teacher has demonstrated

confidence in reporting student progress and effort in the third quarter through observations, participation and quality of work.

Early Childhood has never received “grades” but rather documentation of student progress and growth. Typically, the educators of our toddlers, PS and PK learners delay the assessment of skills until the end of the quarter to ensure that each child has matured to the fullest chronologically, emotionally, socially, physically and cognitively. With the social isolation the past three weeks, teachers are not in position to measure skills in the classroom setting, which is significant to the progress report. Parents will receive a report card that offers a narrative of observations in the classroom and online, but isolated skills are too difficult to measure remotely and outside of the classroom environment.

Will tuition be reimbursed for the months of April, May and June?

With respect to the teaching and learning that are ongoing, it is important to note that your tuition supplements ALL of our faculty/staff. As a non-profit business as well as a school, we do not carry a budgetary surplus year-to-year so we operate on our yearly income to meet our expenses. Our income is based on your tuition revenue and the support of donors and tax credits.

Over 80% of our expenses target salaries. The other 20% includes educational materials and overhead. In short, if we are not collecting tuition, our teachers cannot be paid, and EDS fails to meet its operational budget for the school year.

Please understand, we are minimizing costs, have furloughed part-time employees and are investigating opportunities available to our nonprofit through the Cares Act. If your family is experiencing a severe economic impact with employment as a result of COVID-19, please contact me.

Who do I contact if I have a question about the distance learning assignments and instruction?

Your first recourse is the classroom teacher. Each educator has embraced distance learning with a platform that is comfortable to s/he and can offer you the best support related to what is expected and within what time frame.

To what extent, if any, should my child be completing assignments for specialty area teachers (i.e. performing arts, visual arts, physical education, LS science, EC and LS Spanish)?

The specialty area educators want to assist you in contributing to the well-roundedness of your child, in accordance with our mission. Through School Speak *under your child's grade level announcements* each week, the specialty area teachers are offering a menu of ideas. Just as in a restaurant with the menu, your child has the opportunity to select what s/he prefers. Take time each week to participate as you can in the specialty areas. We wish to offer your child and family guidance in how to extend the lessons we would accomplish in the school setting. Please understand, the specialty area teachers enjoy and appreciate any opportunity to see your child exercising his/her creativity and movement. Feel free to email individual teachers photos and videos to that end.

Middle School students need to demonstrate progress for their third quarter grade. There are set expectations toward earning competencies required for high school admissions. Be sure to follow the instructions provided by your specialty area educators in STEM, physical education, performing arts, visual arts and world language.

Who do I contact if I have a question about technology?

Web searches, you tube videos for instructional know-how are your best defense. Mr. Gutowski, our technology director, may also offer you a support. His email address is bgutowski@riedayschool.com. Keep in mind, many of your questions may be related to internet connectivity. Your neighborhood or home bandwidth affects your internet connection. Mr. Gutowski cannot assist to that end. Spectrum, V-Net, Time Warner Cable, etc. can assist you with any internet connection issues. Closing the number of devices in your home connected to the internet and other web browsers that may be open while your child is working online will be helpful too.

What events have been cancelled/postponed that were scheduled in April?

The dates planned for Eve of Shakespeare, EDS Follies, Arts Walk and any April field trips have been cancelled. It is our hope that each event will be rescheduled in late May. The Athletic Awards Ceremony, Boston trip, Chautauqua trip and Graduation ceremony have not been cancelled to date.

The spring athletic season has been postponed.

Parent-teacher conferences (April 10th) and the spring break (April 10th through 19th) will continue as planned.

Should my child be on a screen all day long?

Absolutely not. The amount of screen time needed is appropriate to your child's age and grade. Our expert teaching faculty have designed plans that are developmentally appropriate. Schedule breaks, physical activity, socialization when possible and we value that family time is a must.

How will my child receive learning support or counseling if needed?

Classroom teachers are available 8:00am-3:30pm, Monday through Friday. If your child needs to talk, receive additional help on an assignment, experience the support of his/her teacher or friends, please reach out to the classroom teacher without hesitation. By now, the teachers have established their communication system directly with you. Do not hesitate to reach out for any assistance needed.

Our specialists that work with assigned students are available through email or by phone during the school day. Please don't hesitate to reach out to them at any time.

- Sue Lee (speech): sue_lee@iu5.org
- Tara Mitchell (reading): tara_mitchell@iu5.org
- Stephanie Sherwood (reading): stephanie_sherwood@iu5.org
- Jody Donovan (math): jody_donovan@iu5.org
- Chris Musi (MS math): christine_musi@iu5.org
- Allison Parr-Plasha can also be reached at aparrplasha@eriedayschool.com for counseling services.

What is the type and frequency of communication that I can expect to receive from EDS?

- Classroom teachers are available, 8:00am – 3:30pm
- Classroom teachers will continue to reach out through the Distance Learning Platforms listed among the Announcements in School Speak
- The Head of School will communicate weekly (or more depending on situation) through email and among School Speak Announcements

- The Head of School is working remotely as well as on campus, feel free to email (ktyler@eriedayschool.com) or call (814.881.4339). Do not rely on the EDS office phone for responses.

My child left an item at school, how can I retrieve it?

Families may not enter the school during this time per the Governor's listing of essential businesses permitted to be open. Please contact me if your child needs something *essential* from his/her locker, desk, cubby, etc. at ktyler@eriedayschool.com.

What is the plan for standardized testing?

We will not be conducting our Terra Nova assessments this year.

How can I support my child with the distance learning plan?

We all understand that the shift to distance learning has forced our students and families to make adjustments. A continued *partnership* with parents/guardians and teachers can play a vital part of ensuring the success of the plan. Most teachers have surveyed your child or parents to learn in further detail how you are handling the online learning in your home. The information assists them in how best to meet your needs.

Classroom teachers, specialty teachers, specialists, and our administration are all available to support and guide students (and parents/guardians/caregivers) should they need help. Below are some guidelines for parents/guardians/caregivers to help students achieve success with distance learning. Overall, we encourage you to embrace this time at home as a new adventure with great possibilities. *Enjoy your family!*

Establish a regular schedule for your child & stay engaged with her/his learning

Help your child(ren) establish and maintain a *routine and structure* for the day, beginning with a *regular bedtime and wake-up time each day*. While some of our students may want to stay up late and sleep in, establishing a regular school day routine will help your child retain a sense of normalcy and engagement in learning. Be sure to help your child *build in "breaks"* during the school day, encouraging them to stand up and move around so they are not remaining sedentary throughout the day. Begin and close each "school day" with a brief *check-in* as well as a show of interest throughout the day, at regular intervals, to ensure that your child is successfully engaging in distance learning.

Reach out to your child's teacher if you observe your child struggling to stay focused. Setting *clear expectations* with your child about regular school day hours will help your child maintain a schedule and stay on top of his/her schoolwork. Pacing work is important. Many assignments are opened on specific days, per content area. Your child needs to recognize that everything does not need to get accomplished at once. Asking for extensions on assignments is acceptable among all of our teachers.

Create a study space for your child

Productive learning relies on a conducive environment. We recommend that you create a *separate, quiet space* in your home for your child to study. The family room sofa with close proximity to a television or your child's bedroom may not be the optimal place for your child to learn. We recommend that you choose an open area in the family living space (kitchen table, dining room, etc.) to *avoid isolating* your child and to allow parents/guardians to monitor your child's learning and screen activity. A room with *strong wireless connection* will also be important.

Stay in communication with your child's teachers

Your child's teachers will maintain regular communication with you. The frequency of the communications will depend on your child's age, developmental stage, and level of independence. While teachers are available as resources for your child and for you, please keep in mind that our teachers will need to be in regular email communication with *all* of their families, so we ask that you be mindful when communicating with teachers, strive to be succinct, and focus on the essential. *Remember that all of us at EDS have families too so we are also balancing work and home.*

Encourage independence and allow for productive struggle

Stay engaged in your child's learning by asking s/he questions and having s/he share thoughts while *encouraging independence* so your child can take ownership of his/her own learning. Some *productive struggle is essential* to learning, so we ask that parents allow their child(ren) to grapple with problems and come up with ideas for tackling them. Stepping in too quickly to help solve problems will deprive your child of the opportunity to learn, try new approaches, and gain greater independence and confidence. If your child becomes discouraged and/or overwhelmed by schoolwork, please reach out to your child's teachers, specialists or our counselor.

Help your child maintain social contact with peers

It will be very important for your child to stay in social contact (through virtual means) with her/his friends and peers during distance learning periods. Encourage your child to interact with friends through Facetime/Google Meet/Zoom or through phone conversations. Be sure to monitor online platforms (see COVID-19 under

Announcements for precautions). The children can form study groups created by their teachers or informal groups that they develop on their own. There is a Middle School Book Club hosted by a student and there are 'play dates' scheduled by a teacher, just to name a few of the social interactions occurring already. Reaching out to other parents will help your child *stay connected* and feel a part of the school community. Remember, all parent phone numbers and/or email addresses can be found through School Speak by clicking "Members".

Wellness: Encourage physical activity / movement and monitor stress

Physical movement and exercise are vital to maintaining physical and mental health, reducing stress and anxiety, and improving concentration and focus for more effective learning and retention. Parents/guardians should *monitor student stress levels* and reach out to the guidance counselor for advice as needed (see Message from the Guidance Counselor among the School Speak Announcements). The health and wellness of our students is of the utmost importance to us. Parents/guardians can partner with the school by *checking in on their child's physical activity* and ensuring that s/he is participating in the activities provided, if not otherwise active.

Time management

During certain times in the distance learning schedule, some students may need help with time management. Teachers are available to assist, but it is also important for parents to *ensure that students are spending appropriate increments of time on schoolwork*. Again, pacing assignments is crucial.