



TEACHING AND LEARNING

Parent Newsletter

Dear Dragon Families,

Welcome to the start of the 2020-2021 school year. I first would like to sincerely thank you for your partnership in your student's education. These past several months have certainly been unique and I recognize that families have had to juggle many things. We truly appreciate all of your efforts.

Our first newsletter is information regarding how to support your student in remote education along with some tips on how to balance all of the things you are trying to manage every day.

The pandemic, has no doubt, created many challenges for how we educate our students. However, there have also been several silver linings during this situation. Our staff has significantly increased their technology skills, learned new ways of delivering instruction, and demonstrated creativity. Our main focus has been and continues to be focusing on student well-being.

We are looking forward to the day that we can have students back in-person. We miss them dearly and cannot wait to see them.

Thank you again for your support, understanding, and collaboration. We are Orion strong and Dragon proud.

Sincerely,

Heidi Mercer
Assistant Superintendent of Teaching and Learning





FROM THE TEACHING & LEARNING OFFICE

Supporting Your Student(s) During Remote Learning

Lake Orion Community Schools wants to continue to support you in this journey though remote learning. Our Content Instructional Coaches/Specialists have put together some tips and tools to help you support your children, and help make it the best experience it can be for our students. We have solicited and compiled support for all levels.

Mistakes are valuable.

Try not to give answers, but praise them for working hard and not giving up. Be clear that mistakes help us learn.

One way of supporting your learners is to let them have a go at the activity/problem for themselves, and then to look at their/the solution with a parent or a sibling. Encourage your children to attempt to solicit help (from a pod mate, a sibling, or an online tutorial) before coming to you, if you are working or otherwise occupied at home.

The Answer is not as important as you might think.

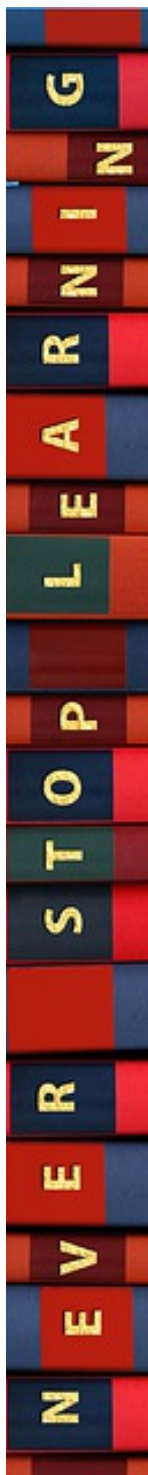
Some of your children will/may get stuck in places in their learning, but we have provided some questions that can help if learners get stuck at home. See below. Being stuck is to be expected and even welcomed, as it's often when we are getting ourselves unstuck that we make the most progress in our learning. Encourage the learner to tell the story of their thinking so far.

Prompt them to "explain their thinking out loud". Often, simply by thinking aloud, the learner can realize what they did wrong, and they see their mistake.

How can I help them without doing it for them?

Here are some question prompts that you could use:

- "What do you know about this problem? What part confuses you?"
- "Is your solution like this one? What's the same? What's different?"
- "Could you have worked it out in a different way?"
- "Do you understand what they did here, in this problem?"
- "What do you know about this problem, that you can use here?"



THE SCIENCE OF MINDFULNESS

Stephanie Harris, District Mindfulness Instructor & Oakview Art Teacher



Everyday Mindfulness: *Easy ways to infuse mindfulness into everyday life.*

Now, more than ever, we are in need of a way to self-regulate – our nervous system, our emotions, and our minds. Before we even know it, our breathing is shallow, and our chest is tight. Mindfulness, or the act of intentionally being present and aware of ourselves and our environment, is a great tool to choose for self-regulation, but the time just isn't always there for a formal practice. Some days we are just doing our best to make it through our busy schedules and obligations without incident. This is where the practice of informal or integrated mindfulness is extremely beneficial and convenient.

Informal or Integrated Mindfulness is a way of introducing or “infusing” small moments of mindfulness into your day in order to regain a sense of presence or a feeling of groundedness. The purposeful act of being present, in our day, allows us to better manage our mental and emotional state so that we can de-stress and do our best.

The quickest and easiest way to regain presence is to use our sense of touch or our physical being. It is known in the mindfulness community that once you “drop into your body”, there is nowhere else you can be but in the present moment; it is in our mind that we time travel. By simply noticing our feet planted on the floor or where our hands are making contact, it immediately brings the focus back to the now, where we can re-set and regulate. Do this as many times as needed throughout the day until it becomes second nature. Make sure to maintain a natural breathing pattern while doing this.

S.T.O.P.

It's not the experience but how we respond to the experience that counts. Mindfulness allows our mind to create space, increasing the gap between a stimulus and our response to that stimulus. The S.T.O.P. technique is a great way to drop into the present moment more often throughout our day creating that space:

S – Stop what you are doing.

T – Take a few deep breaths.

O – Observe the experience just as it is. Notice how your thoughts, emotions, and body are responding to it.

P – Proceed with what you were doing or reflect on what you learned during the observation step.

If you have the time, a more formal mindfulness practice is highly encouraged. However, with or without a formal practice, infusing small amounts of mindfulness into your day, can provide just enough “present-moment awareness” to regulate our nervous system and move on - very interesting how gratitude works.

Apps that provide mindfulness throughout the day:

Breathe (free) - Excellent sessions that are short and to the point. Choose "Explore."
Insight Timer (free) - Again, choose your time limit.

Follow me on Twitter @LOmindfulness





FROM THE FAMILY SCHOOL COORDINATORS

Navigating the Uncertainties of Remote Learning



During the uncertainties of remote learning, the collaborative partnership between parents and educators is vital, and we are thankful for your efforts and sacrifices during this process. Balancing home life, education, employment and pandemic related stressors is a daunting task that requires skills for coping with stress. Adopting strategies to remain or regain calm, recognizing the scope of your control, and creating boundaries to promote balance between your role as both co-educator and caregiver are all an integral part of managing stress. Leading by example can guide children to develop their own important problem-solving skills.



Calming Strategies to Reduce Stress

Even in the best of situations we can lose our patience and become frustrated. Listed below are some examples of strategies to stay calm and focused, and to help regain our sense of peace to be able to continue on the path to success.

- Take slow, deep breaths; Slowly count backwards from twenty to zero.
- Get some fresh air; Take a walk inside or outside.
- Call a friend; Garner community support.
- Drink something cold or warm; Chew gum or something crunchy.
- Turn out the lights for a few minutes; Listen to music, read or listen to an audiobook, collect your thoughts.
- Practice a grounding exercise: Find 5 things you see; 4 things you touch; 3 things you hear; 2 things you smell; 1 thing you taste.



Recognizing What We Can and Cannot Control

During these unprecedented times, we are reminded that there are so many things we cannot control. Instead, we can choose to focus on controlling our reactions to the stressors and unwanted changes that arise, allowing ourselves to move forward.

- **Validate what you're feeling.** Accept what you are feeling without judgement, as all feelings are ok. It is important to clearly identify the emotions we are experiencing so we can manage them and move on.
- **Breathe Deeply.** Deep breathing calms our bodies. Take deep breaths through your nose and long exhales through your mouth.
- **Don't focus on the why.** Thinking about the "what-ifs" keeps you from focusing on what you can control.
- **Practice Gratitude.** Write down things to be appreciative of. Read them as needed to help rewire your brain to a positive mindset.
- **Move.** Physical activity can help manage strong emotions. Think about what movement relaxes you and do it.
- **Connect.** When we are overwhelmed, we may pull away from people although this is when we need connection the most. Our friends and family can help provide support and keep us grounded.
- **Remind.** Tell yourself that the stress you are feeling is not permanent. When we are experiencing strong emotions, we sometimes forget that feelings change. There are things you can do to feel better. Be kind to yourself.





FROM THE FAMILY SCHOOL COORDINATORS

Navigating the Uncertainties of Remote Learning Continued

Creating and Balancing Boundaries Between Home and School

For many, the transition to remote learning has meant that school, work, and home-life all exist within the confines of the same physical space. There is no clear transition from the ending of one role to the beginning of another. Creating new rituals that signal the end of the work/school day and the shift to rest, relaxation, and recreation is more important than ever. Here are some suggestions to help promote balance.

- **Adhere to a schedule and make it visible.** Use an online calendar and other tools to keep tasks and due dates organized. Make a family calendar visible to all. Schedule family time and prioritize technology-free hours.
- **Create new rituals.** Use a chime or bell to signal the beginning and end of the school day and your roles as co-teacher and student. Wear a visual reminder of your role as co-teacher such as an ID badge, hat, or article of clothing that can be removed at the conclusion of the school or workday signaling the end of that role. Be creative.
- **Prioritize self-care.** Self-care practices play a critical role in overall health and well-being. Schedule time during your day for breaks, meals, and recreation or hobbies. Taking time for yourself will not only result in a healthier and more resilient you in all your roles, it will also model a balanced lifestyle to your children.

For more ideas, visit: <https://biglifejournal.com/>





ELA

Beth Bruce, Kelly Day & Kate DiMeo, Instructional Coaches

Does your Child Need a Book?

Lake Orion's English Language Arts courses often give kids choice about what they read. We often call on K-12 students to choose their own books. We want students to enjoy the books they read! However, this can be challenging for kids, especially with so many options.

Fortunately, the State of Michigan has resources that can help. MEL is part of the State of Michigan's library system. One of the eResources provided to tax payers is Novel List Plus. You simply enter a recent book your child enjoyed and a list of possible book matches is generated. With advanced searches, you can search by genre, grade level, author etc. For a tour of this resource by Lake Orion's instructional coaches, [click here](#).

Happy reading!





ENGLISH LEARNER DEPARTMENT

Jen Howe, EL District Coordinator

Welcome to the 2020-2021 school year!

The English Learner Department services over 250 students and families in Lake Orion Community Schools. In addition to English, our families speak over 30 different languages, and we are proud to partner with you and your children.

During remote learning, English Learners will be supported by their EL teachers in the following ways:

- Individual and small group instruction that aims at developing fluency and literacy in English.
- A structured research-based program of teaching the English language through science, math, social studies and language arts.
- Use of students' home language (through bilingual dictionaries or online translators) as needed to assist students in understanding and acquiring new concepts in subject areas like math, science and social studies.
- Opportunities to be included in all district interventions, enrichment programs, and accelerated programs

During remote learning, there are also many ways you can support your child at home including:

- Use your best language at home to support your child's learning. By using your home language, you support your child's literacy in your native language AND in English.
- When possible, involve the whole family in learning activities. Older siblings can read to younger siblings, or the whole family can take turns telling stories.
- Connect with other multilingual families. Contact your child's school to be paired up with families who would like to mentor and connect with you!
- Utilize digital tools. Contact your child's classroom teacher, EL teacher, or media specialist for videos, resources, and how-tos.
- Maintain relationships and communication with your child's school and teachers. Translation tools, translated copies of district communications, and interpretation services can be provided, if necessary.

We are here for you! Please contact us at any time.

| Staff Member | Buildings |
|------------------------------|--|
| Samina Ata, EL Teacher | Orion Oaks, Webber |
| Kelli Graul, EL Teacher | Blanche Sims, Oakview, Scripps, Waldon |
| Pamela Haines, EL Teacher | Paint Creek, Webber |
| Annmarie Lo, EL Teacher | Lake Orion High School, Learning Options |
| Melissa Ostertag, EL Teacher | Carpenter, Stadium Drive |
| Emily Robinson, EL Teacher | Scripps |



MATH DEPARTMENT

Brent Cubitt and Emilie Schiff, Instructional Coaches

Math K-12

Latitude and Space

Please allow for independence. We know you want to help your children, but it is important they are showing their teacher what THEY know.

Encourage self-direction, both in school and out. "That feels like a tough problem, what's your plan to start solving it? "What are some ideas you may have to work on that problem"?

Attitude and Stamina

Expect downtime as your children are developing stamina.

Stay positive. Your attitude will affect your child's attitude.

Honor the complex nature of remote learning and empathize with the struggle. "I know it feels harder and different from school. What can I do to help you feel better about this?"

Organization

Keep a set schedule at home.

Have your children eat before they start their daily sessions.

If possible, provide them a space dedicated to learning. When they leave that space, they will feel like they are "out" of school. This allows for school/home balance.





SCIENCE DEPARTMENT

Andrea Brook, Jamie Kimber, Pam Moreman, Instructional Coaches

Elementary Science at Home



Science is a great time for students to get up and move around. Many items in your homes can be used to help students expand their science activities. Science is also a great way to elaborate on their learning.

For example, Kindergarteners are learning what science is. Make a big deal about their science notebooks. Have them make observations and write and draw in their notebooks, just like a real scientist.

1st Grade is studying how seeds turn into parent plants. Help them plant a seed or notice seeds you find outside.

2nd Grade is looking at land features. When you are driving, point out swamps, forests, farmland, rivers, creeks and lakes. How would they draw these on a map?

3rd Grade is starting the year with weather. Have them practice giving you a daily weather report or track the daily temperature.

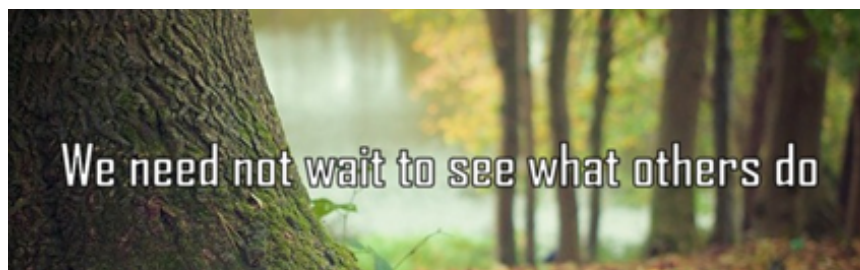
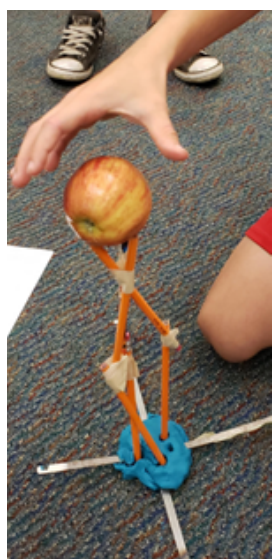
4th Grade is exploring how energy is transferred by collisions. Bring this up as you kick a soccer ball against a wall.

5th Grade is looking at the properties and changes in matter. Cooking is a great way to explore this concept.

As always, the practices scientists and engineers follow are key. Try to get your children:

- Asking questions.
- Creating models to explain what is happening.
- Planning and carrying out an investigation.
- Looking at and using data.
- Using math in science.
- Constructing explanations: make a claim, give evidence, explain your reasoning
- Debating claims based on evidence. Prove you are correct.
- Obtain, evaluate and communicate information. Do some research.

All of these practices are explored in our science curriculum. Ask your children which practice they did in their lesson today. Let science be a place for your child to explore what they love.





TECHNOLOGY & CAREER READINESS

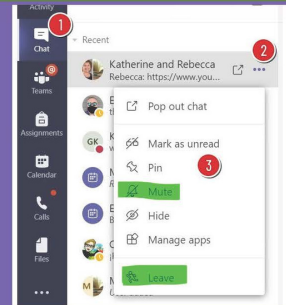
Craig Schoon, Instructional Technology Coach & Rosa Everitt, Career Readiness, HS

Teams Tips for *students*

TURN OFF CHAT NOTIFICATIONS

Getting too many chat notices or want to leave a chat?

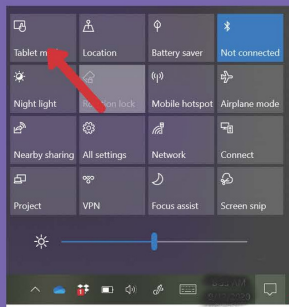
1. Click on "Chat"
2. Click on "More Options"
3. Click on "Mute" to stop notifications
4. Click on "Leave" to leave the group chat



TABLET MODE

Keyboard not working? Try turning off tablet mode

1. Click on the speech bubble
2. Click "Tablet Mode" to turn it off or on



KEYBOARD CAMERA

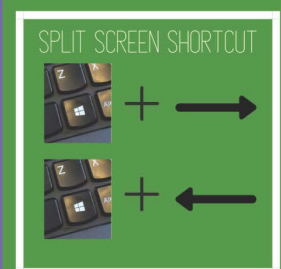
Switch from the webcam to keyboard camera in a Teams meeting

1. Tap on your computer screen
2. Tap on the camera icon
3. Your camera will switch between screen and keyboard camera



SPLIT SCREEN

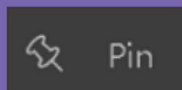
Easily split your screen by using the following keystrokes



FOCUS AND PINNING IN A TEAMS MEETING

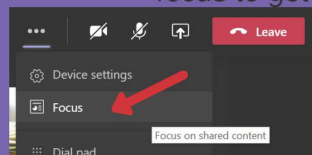
Pin the teacher to make their box stay large on your screen.

1. Click "Participants" and then the 3 dots
2. Click on the pin icon next to your teacher's name



When a teacher is sharing their screen, use focus to get a larger view.

1. Find "Meeting Controls"
2. Click on the 3 dots
3. Click on "Focus"



You can also click on the teacher's picture and the 3 dots to pin/focus