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# Hillery Park Elementary School

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*Home of the Huskies*

## Monthly Messenger

*December 1, 2020*

### Quarter One and Second Chances

The first 10 weeks of the school year were a period of great learning for everyone involved. Teachers have quickly learned how to use new technology while parents have been working diligently to keep their children connected to us remotely. My hat is off to our teachers and heart goes out to our parents. I have been placed in a unique situation these past 8 months. Not only am I blessed to be our school's Principal, but I am father to 4 school aged children who have been learning from home this entire time. I am also the proud husband of a Kindergarten teacher who works in a district which has remained fully remote. This level of perspective is a gift as I am able to see this situation from all sides. I really feel for all involved as our lives have literally been turned upside down.

However, we have all worked diligently to learn and are getting better at delivering instruction remotely. Our students have been fast learners and demonstrated great adaptability learning to use the technological tools for educational purposes. We realize that not every student has the same situation or the circumstances. While most students have been able to complete all of hers or his work, there are others who had a late start and have yet to completely catch up. We also acknowledge the many difficulties caused due to faulty internet and other tech issues.

In order to provide all students with a fair chance to gain credit for Quarter One, students who have not completed their assignments or have not submitted the high quality work we expect at Hillery Park Elementary are being granted an extension to do just that. Rather than issue failing grades to students who have yet to submit their work, the BPS is extending an opportunity for students to demonstrate their knowledge by completing these important assignments. This week, all students who have an *Incomplete* for the first quarter, will receive a letter in the mail and a phone call to inform parents of the situation. Our teachers have a credit recovery plan in place for each student who receives an *Incomplete*. The teacher will provide students and families with the details of this plan. The students will have until December 23<sup>rd</sup> to complete and submit hers or his work.

## **RtI (Response to Intervention)**

I am sure you have seen **RtI** on your student's schedule since the beginning of the school year. **RtI** is part of all students in grades K-6 schedule. **RtI** is a daily opportunity for students to receive targeted literacy support which is based on their specific needs. Recognizing that all students develop at a slightly different rate and require different means of instruction, our **RtI** period is designed for students to work in smaller groups which are led by different teachers. Our reading teachers, special education teachers and classroom teachers each have different groups and provide different lessons based on the students current level of literacy.

If we were in school students would be moving to different rooms and meeting with their **RtI** instructor for 40 minutes and then returning to their classroom. In a remote setting, students will be entering these different classrooms via different Teams links which are found in their Schoology folders. **RtI** is incredibly important. This is a daily opportunity for students to receive prescribed training and work on specific skills they need to improve their reading, writing and speaking. You will see that all **RtI** periods are Synchronous. We need student to be present and active during these periods. If you experience any difficulty accessing the links, please let us know.

## **RtI Math and ELA+RtI**

You will see something new on the students' schedules for Quarter Two. **RtI Math** is now a stand-alone period offered to students in grades K-6 every BDF day. This period will allow our teachers, Support Math Teacher and Math Coach to help students either catch up or advance their math skills. We must recognize one of the many negative results of this pandemic is our students are in different places as far as the development of their mathematical skills. In order to address these delays and disparities, we are offering additional support.

**ELA+RtI** will be a time when our reading teachers are pushing into classrooms. This will not require a different link. This will just be an extend ELA period held in Synchronous fashion. Students will work in smaller groups with our reading teachers and their classroom teacher. This is another means of providing as much support to our students as possible.

## **Students' Schedules**

The changes to RtI led to the students' schedules looking a little different. All schedules are updated and can be found on the Hillery Park webpage.

Link to Hillery Park Elementary webpage: <https://www.buffaloschools.org/PS027>

### **Teachers Teaching from Home**

Last week, as a result of the change from Erie County being designated as *Orange Zone*, it was determined that only 25% of our staff could work from our school. The result is most teachers being forced to work from home. While our teachers and staff are going to continue to do their very best for our students, please recognize that this will make their work more difficult. I know we will overcome this and meet the challenge. Just as I know we will continue to work as a school community to support one another in this mission.

### **Lunch time**

We will continue to provide lunches and breakfast for families here at Hillery Park each M, W, F from 11-1pm. All schools in the district are doing the same. Families can go to any of the schools to receive breakfast and lunch during that timeframe. You do not need to travel to Hillery if you live closer to another school.

Additionally, I know some families have been concerned with students missing class time while they travel out to pick up lunch. Let me be clear on this point...no student at this school will be discredited in any way for going to get lunch. I simply ask that students and families communicate this with the teachers so we know. Lastly, please take advantage of getting these lunches. The more people who take advantage of this program, the better this is for all involved. Each of you have paid into this program with your tax dollars. By getting this food and using it, you are also supporting farmers and other essential workers who are making this food available. This program is good for our kids, our families and our economy.

### **IT Help**

We recognize that the biggest problem most students and parents are still facing is technology. If you are without a working device, hotspot or need a device examined, please go to **Student Device Distribution & Technical Support** on **1515 South Park**. They are open Monday through Friday, 10:00 am - 4:00 pm with extended distribution hours on **Wednesdays 10:00 am - 6:30 pm**. If you are having issues with IT, call the help desk at **716-816-3510**.

### **Husky Paw Badges**

One of our students' favorite positive behavior incentive systems is our Husky Paw program. Teachers and staff members acknowledge when students "do the right thing" by awarding them with Husky Paw Badges. These badges are a currency of sort here at Hillery Park. Each week any students who has earned at least (5) Husky Paws, (for each 5 they earn they gain another spot on the wheel) has his or her name entered in to our own version of Wheel of Fortune. Each week we spin the wheel and the winner from each class receives a prize. So far this year we have mailed out gift cards for McDonald's and Tim Hortons.

## **Students of the Month**

Each month, homeroom teachers PK-8 will select one (1) student who has exemplified the Character Trait of the Month through his or her actions, words, and deeds. *Students of the Month* should be shining examples of what we consider being Respectful, Responsible and Ready. Additionally, Special area teachers (Spanish, Technology and Home and Careers) will select one student per month as the *Student of the Month* in that discipline. Encore area teachers (Art, Music and PE/Health) will select two students: one from PK-4 and one from 5-8.

Students/Parents will receive a certificate, a custom Hillery Park Elementary tee shirt, Bumper Sticker and gift certificate (TBD.) With parent permission, each Student of the Month will have their picture and narrative of accomplishments will be posted on our School Website.

## **Need a Break? Take a Break. Communicate**

Teaching and learning remotely has created an entire new set of issues for students and teachers alike. (Not to mention Principals and Parents) While we still have too many students who are doing too little and not attending classes nearly enough, we have others who are so diligent about being tuned in and doing their work they sometimes feel over-whelmed and experience anxiety. One thing I know for certain, anxiety and depression are real and we nothing to joke about. One way to find balance is for students to take a break when they need one.

Take a 15 minute break to get outside, take a walk, walk the dog, stretch, call a grandparent or some other means of getting away from the screen and allowing your mind to switch gears. I wouldn't suggest a video game or TV...that is opposite of what is needed. Movement and music might just do the trick. The real trick though is having the discipline to communicate this with your teacher, don't abuse the break and get back to work once you are recharged. I read a great quote today, "*Mental toughness doesn't make you invincible, it makes you adaptable.*" Here is the link to a good article I read both as a parent and as a principal.

<https://www.nationalgeographic.com/family/2020/05/how-to-keep-kids-positive-through-pandemic-coronavirus/#close>

## **Comic Relief**

I have said many time "we either laugh or cry" and I am not crying today. I hope these cartoon bring a smile to you face today.

<https://www.parents.com/kids/education/these-hilarious-cartoons-showcase-the-reality-of-distance-learning-at-home/>