

April 9, 2020

Dear Elk Rapids Parents and Students,

Welcome to a new era in education for Elk Rapids Public Schools! As you likely know, we have been tasked with the unprecedented responsibility of teaching the final 39 days of school in a remote format. Thanks to previous Elk Rapids Schools initiatives and successful bond votes, we are uniquely positioned to accept this challenge. However, just like traditional learning, educators need student **and** parent commitment to succeed. I hope you will join us on this unique journey to prepare each of our Elk Rapids students for the next step academically.

Each grade level will have slightly different experiences, but the basis for all digital learning will be a platform that organizes and houses student learning. Early Learners and Elementary School teachers will communicate with parents using SeeSaw or Google Classroom. At the 6-12 grade levels, teachers will communicate with students through Google Classroom, email, and Remind text messages which have been used consistently by teachers and students for several years. Our digital communication strategy takes advantage of systems our staff already have in place but also allows us to learn with our community through new tools. Thank you for your early support of a system that continues to provide outstanding learning opportunities!

Elk Rapids educators expect each student to log into their learning platform each weekday and complete the work provided by teachers. For our young learners, parents will play a major role in supporting the learning process. Educators understand this is new territory for some parents! Teachers will send specific directions with assignments along with tips on helping students learn new material. They are only an email away for follow up questions. We will need to work together to help students prepare for the next school year. Your role is invaluable to help your child succeed!

With older students, parental guidance will look different. Older students tend to be more independent, so parents need to play more of a role as a coach and teacher. Like a coach motivates his or her team, students will need to be motivated to learn in this format. Teachers will inspire learning through the lessons they deliver, and parents will need to help students regularly engage in lessons. For this reason, we ask parents to:

- Designate specific learning times in the home. Pick a dedicated block of time for your students to complete school work. Parents should require this learning time to be free from the distractions of social media and their phones.
- We strongly encourage parents to view their student's Google Classroom accounts and even watch lessons with their students sometimes. This will give a sense of what the lessons are about.
- Both students and parents should email teachers if they have questions. Encourage this dialogue as a parent - soon your young adults will need to engage in dialogue as adults. This is excellent practice!

Teachers will use Zoom, Google Meet or videotaped presentations to connect with students in an engaging format twice per week. We highly encourage students to attend these sessions. Keeping the face-to-face connection with teachers and classmates will help build motivation for students to continue learning at home. It will help create a sense of togetherness as we move forward each week.

This formal transition to remote learning will occur on Monday, April 13. On this day, students will have their first set of formal activities in their learning platform. Families who do not have internet access in their homes should communicate that to building principals and teachers. You can expect further communications from building principals about efforts to help families get connected.

Each building principal will be sending additional documents to students and families that provide specific grade level information. These documents will also address other topics you might be wondering about such as graduation, field trips, athletics, drama, and the class placement process for students next fall. Look for these communications from the principals during the week of April 20 or sooner.

As Elks we all have a common purpose, to provide strong and innovative opportunities for all students to learn. In these unique times, our partnership with families is vital. Please engage with us during this final 25% of the school year and together we will prepare our students for the next steps. Our partnership in this endeavor will further a productive time of learning for our students.

Warmest Regards,

Tom Enslen,
Superintendent