

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT UPDATE

COLUMBUS CITY SCHOOLS DEPARTMENT OF ENGAGEMENT

Update for November 16, 2020

Email the CCS Department of Engagement at engage@columbus.k12.oh.us

CYBER SAFETY - NEW TOOLS AND TIPS TO KEEP STUDENTS CONNECTED, SAFE, AND FOCUSED DURING REMOTE LEARNING:

With students connected to their computers and mobile devices now more than ever before, helping to keep them safe while online is crucial.

During these days of remote learning, we've also come to learn that young bodies like to move and can be easily distracted from hours of virtual schoolwork, so keeping students consistently focused can also be a big lift for parents and caregivers alike.

To help, Columbus City Schools is adding more layers of security to Chromebooks to filter certain online content, and our Technology team is adding extra hours of on-call help into the evening on weekdays and extra time on the weekends to help students stay connected.

For our families and community partners, the Family Engagement team has collected some tips, tools, and strategies that can be used at home or at Learning Extensions Centers to boost "Cyber Safety." Our national cyber-safety partner even has some free tools to help families avoid risky apps, respect kids' privacy, and prevent virtual threats.

And for a select number of CCS families in two neighborhoods, the District is partnering with SMART Columbus on an initiative to provide FREE high-speed home internet access for the rest of the school year to keep students connected.

INSTALLING TIGHTER WEB FILTERS ON DISTRICT CHROMEBOOKS

Privacy and multiple layers of security features are built into every Chromebook to be safe for use right out of the box.

To improve on that security, our Technology team is adding another layer of protection for our students. The District will be updating Chromebooks to implement tighter web filtering controls while students are using the internet.

Once rolled out, this "cyber-safety" upgrade will provide the students with a filtered internet experience, similar to what they would have if they were online in one of our school buildings.

Families and community partners who are working with CCS students (including staff at our Learning Extension Centers) should make sure students are signing into their Chromebooks using their District-provided login and password. This will allow the safety update to be automatically installed.

TECH HELP WHEN CHROMEBOOKS OR PASSWORD DON'T WORK

For parents and caregivers - who work hard each school day to keep students focused on remote learning - it can be frustrating if the Chromebook isn't working or when a login or password can't be found. Help is just a call away.

Our CCS Technology team has added on-call hours to help students and families with their Chromebooks, hotspots, and access to lesson plans and assignments during remote learning. When technical issues arise, call the CCS IT Help Desk at 614-365-8425.

The CCS IT Help Desk can help you figure out general access questions, remote learning login help (Chromebook, Clever, learning apps, Email, Google Classroom, etc.), Parent Portal account issues, finding student Zoom Meeting IDs, and resetting your hotspot password

To better help families throughout the day, the CCS IT Help Desk now has extended hours:

- Monday through Thursday: 6:30 a.m. - 7:00 p.m.
- Friday and Saturday: 9:00 a.m. - 6:00 p.m.
- Sunday: 1:00 p.m. - 5:00 p.m.

You can also email the help desk: ccshelpdesk@columbus.k12.oh.us

ANSWERS TO FREQUENTLY ASKED TECH QUESTIONS

We've collected a few of the most frequently asked questions to the CCS IT Help Desk. Here are some answers that might save you time:

Question: Do you need a Chromebook or a power adapter?

Answer: Contact your child's school principal, NOT the CCS IT Help Desk, to arrange for the pickup of a new device.

Question: Is your Chromebook broken or won't work?

Answer: The CCS IT Help Desk is your main contact point to troubleshoot the problem. Call the number above. If they can't help you get the Chromebook working again, then they'll help you contact the school principal to arrange pickup of a replacement device.

Question: What do you do if you need a hotspot to access the internet?

Answer: If your family does not have Wi-Fi access at home, contact your child's school principal to schedule a date and time to pick up a hotspot.

Question: Is your hotspot not working?

Answer: First, call the device provider (numbers below) to see if they can resolve the issue:

- Verizon hotspots - 800-922-0204
- AT&T hotspot - 937-215-3796
- T-Mobile hotspots - 800-937-8997

After speaking with the provider, if it is determined that the device is broken, contact your child's school to schedule a time to return it and pick up a new hotspot.

NATIONAL EXPERT ON KEEPING KIDS CYBER SAFE RECOMMENDS FAMILIES CREATE TECHNOLOGY CONTRACTS:

This might be a tough conversation but an important one for every family on how to keep children and teens safer online, especially during this time when students spend most of their days either on a laptop, gaming system, or smart phone... and often all at the same time.

The Engagement team recently partnered with Bark, developers of a nationally-recognized online safety tool that monitors content, manages screen time, and filters websites to help protect kids online. They suggest sitting down with your student - and with the devices they use to get online and connect with friends - and create a “technology contract.”

Technology is a privilege, not a right. In most cases, parents are the owners of their kids’ devices, not the kids themselves. So it’s OK to remind kids that you’re loaning them the device in good faith, and you require them to sign a technology contract in exchange.

This is also true for community partners who are hosting Learning Extension Centers or any partners who is helping CCS students get connected to the internet.

A technology contract is a great way for families (or partners) to collaborate with children on rules for using devices and accessing the internet. It can help make sure the whole family is on the same page about how to get the most out of technology, and - most importantly - how to stay safer online. You can download of template for your technology contract form our partners at Bard at www.bark.us/blog/tech-accountability-create-technology-contract-family/.

SET THE GROUND RULES

While the internet offers amazing possibilities, there are also many dangers that exist online.

For younger kids, parents should set the password for any and all accounts the child accesses, and he/she isn’t allowed to change them. If the child is older, parents may want to consider letting them set their own passwords.

Remind them that, as a parent, it’s your right to look through the device at any point to see which sites they visit and who they’re communicating with online.

Make sure your child knows to never video chat with strangers, and that they’re not allowed to provide any personal information on any forum or website without your permission. This includes their name, address, school, birthday, or any other information a stranger could use to find them.

Make it clear that there are consequences for breaking the terms of the technology contract. That might include the loss of privileges associated with their device, losing access to the device for a set time period, or anything else that makes sense for your family.

Remind your child that you’re a team that is in this together. Mistakes will happen, but you’re there to discuss it with them so you can learn and grow together.

DISCUSS ONLINE ETIQUETTE

In addition to setting safety rules for your child, it's also critical to help them understand that there is basic etiquette for navigating the online world.

For example, you could set rules about turning the device off in certain public places like restaurants or at the movies. Or consider a rule where the whole family puts their devices away during dinner or leaves their devices in the kitchen to charge overnight while sleeping.

Your child may know how to be a good person in real life, but the anonymity of the internet can sometimes blur the lines. It's a good idea to clearly spell out that they should never lie to people online.

Remind your child to be a good friend who never promotes or shares hurtful messaging, either.

If your child is old enough to access social media sites, teach them the basics of privacy.

MODEL BEHAVIOR YOU WANT YOUR CHILD TO EMULATE

Children watch what the adults in their lives are doing, so be mindful of how you use technology around them.

For example, a “no smartphone at the dinner table” rule should include adults, too. Set a good example and interact with technology in the same manner you expect from your child.

The internet opens doors to amazing things for your child, and the conversation around responsibility, respect, and safety should be ongoing as technology continues to evolve. With a technology contract in place, everyone in the family can refer to it for clear expectations and actions.

MORE STRATEGIES FOR HELPING STUDENTS STAY FOCUSED

During this school year, Columbus students are engaging in remote learning in a variety of ways. Teachers and staff have become very creative and innovative in finding ways to keep students' attentions.

Still, students can easily become disengaged or frustrated after long days and weeks on online-only learning. So our partners at the Johns Hopkins University School of Education suggest these strategies for help students stay focused:

STRATEGY #1: GET UP AND SHAKE IT

There's no sense in fighting it. Kids need to move their bodies frequently throughout the day.

Encourage movement. Allow time for exercise before children are expected to focus on a distance learning task. Some children are able to better focus on tasks when standing.

Consider having your computer or tablet be on a raised surface so that your child can stand.

STRATEGY #2: NO DOUBLE SCREENING

The fewer screens, the better. Discourage double- or triple-screening - the tendency to work on a computer while watching something on the iPad and chatting with friends on the cell phone.

The same rules around phone use that apply in the classroom should apply at home. Students aren't allowed to have cellphones out during class time. So, encourage your students to leave the cell phone in another room so that they are not tempted to look at it during remote learning time.

Any ideal workspace for a student should be clear of all distractions, including television and other non-essential screens.

STRATEGY #3: TO-DO LISTS GET DONE

Consider using a "to do" checklist for focus. For some children who really struggle with focusing, a basic visual checklist of tasks needed for a particular activity will be helpful.

For example, if the child is asked to watch a lesson, read a prompt, and then provide a written response to the prompt, the checklist would have keywords for each of these required activities: watch, read, write.

The child would check off each task with you as it is completed, and receive some positive praise or another reward when finished.

STRATEGY #4: GIVE ME A BREAK

Give your child (and yourself) a break. Your teacher does not want your child to be frustrated with or miserable about learning. In fact, teachers spend time trying to make lessons interesting, and to tailor instruction to provide the right level of challenge for their students.

If something is too challenging, or your child has hit a frustration level, it's okay to stop the activity and give them a break.

It's also okay to slow down the pace, which means giving your child time to think and process information. It also means participating in segments of learning one at a time rather than trying to tackle a whole lesson in one sitting.

STRATEGY #5: YOU GET A GOLD STAR!

Provide immediate positive feedback. Each time your child completes a remote learning exercise, provide immediate and positive feedback.

Something as simple as putting a check mark, star, or sticker on the work assignment can go a long way in helping to motivate your child.

And don't forget to celebrate yourself, as you are playing such an important role to help your child learn and grow.

CCS PARTNERS WITH SMART COLUMBUS ON PILOT PROJECT TO PROVIDE FREE HIGH-SPEED INTERNET TO FAMILIES:

Having reliable, high-quality internet access has quickly become a vital utility for families throughout Columbus who need to stay connected to school, work, and community.

Columbus City Schools is partnering with Smart Columbus and the City of Columbus to test innovative new ways we can make in-home high-speed internet access affordable and reliable throughout our community.

Together, we've launched a pilot project - supported by CARES Act funding from the City - to offer FREE internet access to CCS families living in two target zones in the South Side and the King-Lincoln neighborhood. Depending on the success of this pilot effort, we may be able to expand to more locations in the future.

The pilot project will start with as many as 200 families in all - roughly 100 per neighborhood.

On the South Side, the zone is between Southwood Avenue and Hosack Street, and High Street and Parsons Avenue. The zone in the King-Lincoln neighborhood sits between I-670 and Broad Street, and between I-71 and Taylor Avenue.

Participants in this pilot program will receive free in-home internet service from January to August 2021, and a \$50 grocery gift card for completing an in-home installation. Participants will be asked to complete two surveys during the program.

We will take what we learn with the help of volunteers like you and explore ways that we can make affordable internet access available to more families in our community

What's most important about this pilot project is the combination of providing internet service with digital literacy training. Together we can help families overcome the barriers of getting on the internet and understanding how best to harness the power of connectivity.

FILLING UP SEATS AT FREE LEARNING EXTENSION CENTERS:

Seats for Columbus City Schools students are starting to fill up at several free Learning Extension Centers (LECs) - safe, adult-supervised, welcoming spaces where students have access to internet, learning devices, and school supplies to assist them in their daily remote learning routine. But community partners who are hosting these LEC locations say there's still room for more.

More than 145 Learning Extension Centers and similar child-care centers across the city offer a wide range of services at different hours throughout the day. LECs provide services for free, while many of the child care providers charge a fee.

To make it easy for families to find the LEC closest to home, we have an interactive map at www.ccsosoh.us/LearningExtensionCenters.

PLANNING AHEAD FOR HOLIDAY BREAKS:

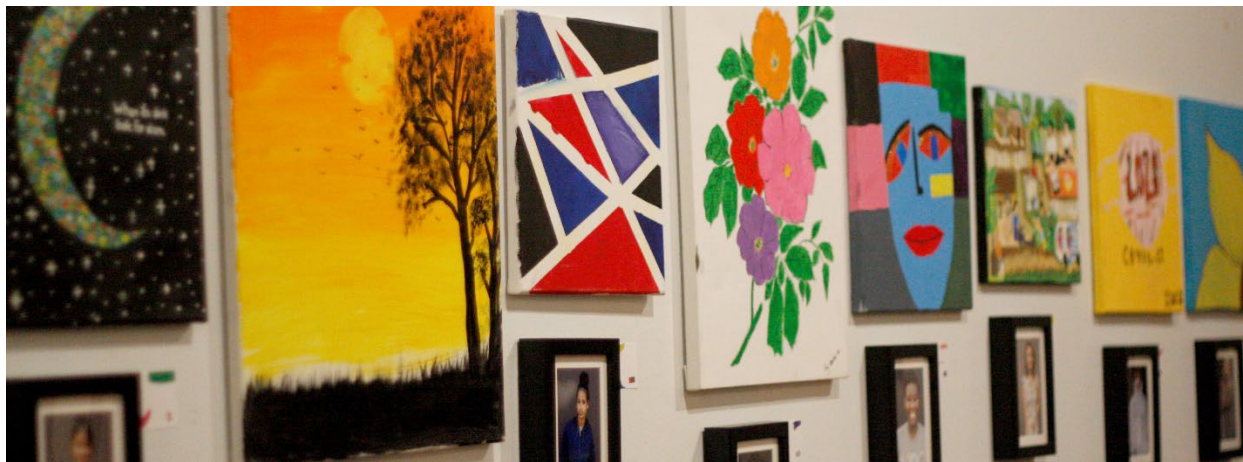
Here's a reminder for our community partners and Learning Extension Center providers. The next two months include two breaks from remote learning for Columbus City Schools.

For the Thanksgiving holiday later this month, there are no classes November 25-27. In December, our Winter Break runs from December 21 through January 1, with students returning to class on January 4.

SPOTLIGHT: STUDENT WORK FOCUS OF OPEN CANVAS SHOW

Our partners at Community Refugee & Immigration Services (CRIS) are hosting a special art show for the next month and a half featuring the amazing talents of students in Columbus City Schools. CRIS works with several of our New American and immigrant students through a successful mentorship program. The works of several of those students are part of an art show going on now through December at Grandview Grind (1423 Grandview Ave).

The art show is called "Open Canvas." CRIS mentors recognized that many students were feeling the stresses of online schooling, a global pandemic, and social unrest. So these New American students were given an opportunity to express themselves in a positive and safe way.



More than three dozen original pieces are on display and represent more than 11 different countries. Some of the work is for sale and 100% of the sale goes to the student artist.

SHARE YOUR PARTNERSHIP IN ACTION UPDATES:

Please share this Engagement Update with the families and stakeholders you serve. During this historic school year, it's important we communicate as much as possible to as many people as possible - in as many languages as possible - about the steps being taken in Columbus City Schools to support our students and engage our families.

Please share your updates with us at Engage@columbus.k12.oh.us.