

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT UPDATE

COLUMBUS CITY SCHOOLS DEPARTMENT OF ENGAGEMENT

Update for December 7, 2020

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

MIDDLE-OF-YEAR DIAGNOSTIC TESTS COMING SOON, iREADY PARTNERS PROVIDE TIPS ON HELPING STUDENTS:

Starting this month, Columbus City Schools will begin the middle-of-year diagnostic tests in Reading and Math for students in Kindergarten through 8th grade. Similar to what they did at the start of the school year, students will take these assessments using the iReady online platform.

During our recent Virtual Family Engagement Session, our partners at iReady provided tips and tools to assist parents and education supporters - like the staffs who operate our Learning Extension Centers) - with understanding the process and ways to effectively support students.

WHAT FAMILIES AND SUPPORTERS NEED TO KNOW AND DO

Teachers need to know what students already know and what they still need to learn so future instruction can be matched to meet students' needs.

The iReady Diagnostic can help get this information for each child, but only if students give it their best effort without anyone else helping with the understanding or answering questions.

This diagnostic is usually given at school, but this time, we need students to take it at home. For most students, this is the second time they've taken the test (first a Beginning-of-Year, now a Middle-of-Year). Knowing how students are progressing will help teachers know how to best support them for the rest of the school year.

The iReady Diagnostic is an adaptive assessment that adjusts its questions to suit student's learning needs. Each item a student sees is individualized based on their answer to the previous question. For example, a series of correct answers will result in slightly harder questions, while a series of incorrect answers will yield slightly easier questions.

DON'T HELP WITH THE ANSWERS... EVEN IF THEY ASK

Students benefit from encouragement during the testing. Parents are often tempted to help on the test, especially since the i-Ready test is hard.

But this test is not for a grade. It helps teachers give students the best instruction possible.

Think of it this way: would you help a student with a vision test? No, because hints won't help the eye doctor help them. With i-Ready, hints on the test now could negatively impact the student's instruction later.

SHOW SUPPORT AND ENCOURAGE STUDENTS

During the testing, encourage students to try their best, even if they get frustrated. Share with them that sometimes things are difficult, but doing hard things will help them grow.

Emphasize “thinking before clicking” on the iReady Diagnostic because just clicking through will not be a productive use of their time nor reflect what the student actually knows. Remind the student to read passages in their entirety, use paper and pencil to solve math problems, and use the tools that appear at the bottom of the screen in some lessons.

Throughout the assessment - every 8–10 minutes or so - show support by using phrases like:

- “I can tell you are very focused. Keep up the good work!”
- “Great work, you have [number] minutes left.”
- “Nice job showing your work/reading each passage carefully.”

If a student is starting to feel frustrated, mad, or upset...

- “Wow. That looks like a very advanced question! That likely means you have been answering a lot of questions correctly.”
- “Don’t get [frustrated, mad, upset, etc.]. Make your best guess so the assessment can find your ‘just right’ level.”
- “Let’s take a quick break! Do you want to finish this question now or when you get back?”

And if a student asks for help...

- “Just like when you take the test at school, I can’t help you find the answer. We want to find out what you know, not what I know. It’s okay if you are stuck!”

Use the following suggestions:

- For Mathematics: “Try working out the problem on paper.”
- For Reading: “Try going back and rereading the text.”
- “Try using a strategy that worked in a similar question before.”
- “It’s okay if you don’t know it. You are going to get some challenging questions, which means you are answering a lot of questions correctly.”
- “Make your best guess and move on to the next question!”

After the assessment...

- “I’m really proud of you. You did a great job [taking your time, showing your work, persisting through challenging questions, etc.]”

Each school will determine its testing dates. The testing window opened today (December 7) and will close on January 22.

Our partners at iReady have put together a website full tips and strategies to help students understand the diagnostic test and prepare them for assessing at home. Find it at:

www.curriculumassociates.com/teaching-learning-2020/home-assessment-family-support.

COTA PROVIDES NEW UBER-LIKE ON-DEMAND SERVICE FOR FAMILIES AND STUDENTS ON SOUTH SIDE:

Our partners at the Central Ohio Transit Authority (COTA) have launched a “COTA//Plus” zone in South Columbus, providing new on-demand microtransit service to places like Nationwide Children’s Hospital, Scioto Audubon Metro Par, South High School, and Marion-Franklin High School.

Comparable to Uber or Lyft, COTA//Plus is an app-based service that operates either as a point-to-point rideshare or as a connection to or from a COTA bus stop. Customers in south Columbus can use COTA//Plus to travel in the 11-square-mile defined zone, or use the service to connect to COTA Lines 4, 5, 8 and 22.

COTA//Plus South Side provides first-last mile connections for customers, connecting them to job centers, hospitals, community centers, and schools including:

- Nationwide Children’s Hospital
- Marion Franklin Community Center
- Barack Community Recreation Center
- Reeb Avenue Center
- Jewish Community Center of Greater Columbus
- South High School
- Marion Franklin High School
- Scioto Audubon Metro Park

Customers can book trips on their smartphone through the COTA//Plus app. After booking a trip, a COTA//Plus vehicle will arrive within 15 minutes to take them to their destination.

This new COTA//Plus South Side operates daily from 5:30 a.m. to 8 p.m. COTA can comfortably seat six passengers, but are temporarily transporting only two customers at a time during the COVID-19 pandemic. Exceptions are made for families to travel together.

To learn more about COTA//Plus South Side, go to www.cota.com/cotaplus.

HEALTH CARE PLANS PROVIDE FREE RIDES TO CCS FOOD SITES:

Columbus City Schools families who are enrolled in one of our city’s largest managed care plans - Buckeye Health Plan, CareSource, Molina Healthcare, or United Healthcare - can access free transportation of our Fuel Up! Food Sites to pick up weekly meals.

These health care partners - who work with families who qualify for Medicare and Medicaid - will also help arrange trips to food pantries and grocery stores to make sure all families have access to needed meals. This is on top of transportation to medical offices, pharmacies, and other health-related destinations.

Our partners at Buckeye Health Plan encourage any families who are part of these plan to check with their provider to find out how to access these free transportation options.

CAPA OFFERS CCS STUDENTS FREE TICKETS TO VIRTUAL CONCERTS AND PERFORMANCES

The show must go on! Even though this COVID crisis has cancelled most concerts and performances, our partners at the Columbus Association for Performing Arts (CAPA) are making sure Columbus City Schools students can still experience nationally-renowned shows... for free.

CAPA's virtual Passport to Learning Student Matinee Series has two special programs coming soon: "Black Violin" in January and "Full STEAM Ahead with Mister C" in March.

Because COVID-19 has limited the ability for students and families to visit theatres, CAPA created exciting new virtual content, and thanks to generous donors and sponsors, all of the content - including virtual tickets to these show' are being provided free of charge.

The programs will feature interactive videos and a resource guide to help connect the performance to curriculum benchmarks and extend the experience with fun activities. All can be done from home or from a Learning Extension Center.

CAPA shared a preview of these two upcoming shows during a recent Virtual Family Engagement Session:

- **Black Violin** (January 11-29) - The world-renowned, virtuosic duo of violist Wil Baptiste and violinist Kev Marcus crosses classical, jazz, and funk in their performances as Black Violin. Their 40-minute, multi-camera presentation for students in grades 3-12 offers a new, educational performance and answers many common questions about the duo with a previously recorded, student-moderated Q&A session. Link to learn more and register before January 8 at www.capa.com/events/detail/black-violin-2/.
- **Full STEAM Ahead with Mister C** (March 5-19) - In this virtual program for students in grades 3-8, scientist and educator "Mister C," also known as Kevin Cornell, brings his regional, Emmy-nominated television show, "Full STEAM Ahead," to life with hair-raising experiments, toe-tapping music, and media that captures the imagination of students and parents. Join Mister C for an action-packed adventure that inspires students' curiosity to explore science found in our everyday lives. Link to learn more and register before March 4 at www.capa.com/events/detail/full-steam-ahead-with-mister-c-vol-2the-world-in-motion/.

Educators, parents, and Learning Extension Centers can register for each engagement at www.capa.com/education/passport-to-learning. A link to access the content will be sent on the day the engagement begins and all content can be used as many times as desired for the duration of the engagement.

CAPA also celebrates the work of student performers with its CAPA Marquee Awards initiative, supporting and advocating for high school musical theatre education throughout Central Ohio. Learn more at <http://www.capamarqueeawards.com>.

VIRTUAL JOB SHADOWING FOR CAREERS IN THE ARTS

Most students know about the careers they see on stage - actors, musicians, dancers - but there is a whole team of people behind the curtain in career fields such as development, marketing, and programming that make what they see on stage possible.

During this remote-learning school year, our partners at CAPA launched a new, virtual education series for students in grades 6-12 to allow young people to “job shadow” these careers in the arts.

Each virtual session includes an introduction to the career, an interview with a professional in the field, a demonstration by the professional of a common task or job responsibility of the featured career, and an activity to extend learning. So far, CAPA has showcased “behind the scenes” jobs such as Technical Director, Marketing Manager, Lighting Designer, Photographer, and Community Development Manager.

Students can check out these sessions at www.capa.com/education/careers-in-the-arts/.

MONITOR SCREEN TIME WITH FREE TOOL FOR CCS FAMILIES:

Last month during a Virtual Family Engagement Session, our partners at Bark - a national software company dedicated to keeping young people “cyber safe” - shared several tips and strategies on protecting students from online predators and monitoring risky online activities. This month, Bark is offering CCS families access to its “Bark Junion Screen Time Tool” for free.

With this tool, families can manage how much screen time a child receives and when they can access the internet on their device. It also allows and blocks access to specific websites or even whole categories like streaming services, online gaming, and more. And with a special location check-in feature, families can keep up with young people no matter where they are by sending location request check-ins for safety.

Bark is offering a free lifetime subscription to CCS families, as long as they sign up before December 31. To learn more and to download “Bark Junior,” go to www.bark.us.

SUPPORTING OUR SENIORS - CHALLENGE OF INTERNSHIPS:

Columbus City Schools has had a long-standing requirement that high school students complete at least one credit of internship in order to graduate, but during this time of COVID and remote learning, this requirement has become a challenge for many seniors.

Last week, Superintendent Dixon asked the Board of Education to waive the requirement for the Class of 2021. Her request grew out of a recent Virtual Family Engagement “Super” Sessions during which heard directly from seniors and their families.

The updated requirements approved by the Board apply to students graduating in the 2020-21 school year. The internship credit requirement remains for the Class of 2022 and beyond.

HEARING MORE FROM FAMILIES ABOUT OVERCOMING COVID:

Getting feedback directly from Columbus City Schools' families and stakeholders has been an important part of planning and organizing supports during this COVID pandemic. The District has several important surveys either in progress or coming soon to help inform our planning and decision-making.

CCS is currently undertaking a professional survey to collect feedback about our families' remote learning experiences and about returning to in-person, blended learning in January. Families can expect to receive a telephone call or email this month inviting them to participate in the short survey.

Families and educators should have recently received an email with a survey regarding our long-term strategic planning process. CCS is partnering with Battelle for Kids to engage the community in developing its strategic plan. As part of that process, we need to hear from various stakeholders about the current state of the district.

In the coming months, we will also be asking for feedback from our families around social-emotional learning and school climate, technology, and our Facilities Master Plan.

SPOTLIGHT: WINTER READING CHALLENGE

Ready. Set. Read. Our partners at the Columbus Metropolitan Library are encouraging students to take time during this holiday season to pick up a good book and earn prizes in the library's online Winter Reading Challenge.

The FREE Winter Reading Challenge runs through January 30th. Students can win a prize pack depending on the number of books and literacy activities they complete in the next two months.

The goal is to get students to read for six hours and complete six reading activities of their choice. If the student completes the reading challenge, they will receive a prize pack that includes a book, bookmark, and mechanical pencil.

Sign up for the Winter Reading Challenge at www.columbuslibrarywinter.readsquared.com. Each student must sign up separately. K-6 teachers and Learning Extension Centers can also register an entire classroom for the Online Winter Reading Challenge.

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.