



Friday, April 3, 2020

Dear RPSA Families,

I have started this letter countless times in the last 24 hours. I simply cannot find the words to express how my heart, and the hearts of our staff, are hurting as we start to accept our time together under the roof of our school has come to an end. I can only imagine the range of emotions in your homes for you and your children. And at the same time, I have a new found excitement for the potential to make the most out of this unimaginable reality. So please stick with me through today's long letter because it is full of HOPE.

What we want you to know is that we are working on a long term plan that focuses on meaningful experiences for students and puts your family first. We want you to know that we are going to do everything in our power to connect with every student, in any way, for the rest of this school year. We will do whatever needs to be done to make this work for your children, your family and our school. The school building will not reopen this school year, but we are not done. We plan to work with each and every student until this is over to make the most of this time regardless of the distance between us.

The Renaissance Team has been hard at work behind the scenes to prepare for our new learning journey with you and your child. As we started to plan and prepare for what school could look like the rest of this school year, we knew above all else that we want the work your child is doing to be meaningful. At RPSA we have fully embraced Project Based Learning because it gives meaning to what students are learning and allows them to be curious. With that in mind, each grade level team will be launching their next project of the school year on Monday.

We know this change in what education looks like is going to come with its challenges. Our hope is that by providing our students with meaningful and engaging work they will continue to be excited to learn and work through those challenges. **Project Based Learning is about the journey just as much as it is about the finished product.**

While we will be working hard to connect and facilitate through Seesaw, we know that you are going to be a large part of this learning journey as well. We are excited to partner with you in support of your child's learning and would like to share some of the Project Based Learning "insider secrets" with you.

1. Each PBL project will start with a launch task - this is meant to generate excitement about the topic and get the students asking questions.
2. The next step will include an overview of the final product. We call this "Begin with the end in mind" - this step helps the students see the purpose of the learning they will do. Giving them an end goal means they have something to work towards and a reason to learn new skills. For example - "If I am going to convince my Mom to buy me a hamster, I need to know how to write a letter and be very persuasive."
3. Throughout a PBL project, our main goal is to encourage students to seek and find answers to their questions. In the background, you and your child's teacher will know what questions they will need answered. Instead of just giving them the information the goal is to get them asking for it first - this is going to make the learning more meaningful for them. Everyone pays more attention when they ask the question, right? You will notice, projects are structured to get students asking questions before answers are just given.
4. A little struggle is a good thing. When your child is stuck, try to guide them towards a resource that will help them find the answer they need. This may be looking up a video to watch, helping them find an informational article to read, or just encouraging them to send a message to their teacher who will be ready with lots of resources to help them.
5. Above all else, keep it fun! We hope to keep your child excited about learning by giving them something fun to design, create, or do and checking in daily on their progress. Projects are designed to be taken one step at a time.

So on Monday, please check Seesaw for your child's launch task. Help your child engage in that task and encourage them to do the daily activities that will follow. Your child's teacher will be setting up ways to interact with students around the project, to discuss progress and encourage learning. Our ultimate goal is to stay connected and keep learning alive.

In the coming weeks we will also be working to find ways to support those who may not have the tools or technology needed. We are planning to order supplies and get those supplies into the hands of students. We are looking at ways to get books...lots and lots of books...into your homes. We want to ensure every home has whatever is needed to make this journey a success. Don't hesitate to ask if your child needs anything. We will work with you to find a way.

Our school goal is to connect with EVERY STUDENT. In this time of uncertainty we are absolutely positive we can continue to find ways to make learning meaningful for your children. We are not done. We are not giving up. At the end of all of this, we will be proud of our students and look back with appreciation for your support.

Please do not hesitate to reach out to your child's teacher or any member of our staff. We are here for you.

In Partnership,
Mrs. Bergman and the RPSA Staff