

# EASTHAMPTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS

## CENTER / PEPIN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL



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Dear Families of Center Pepin Students:

Our eager students are getting accustomed to their remote schedules and are off to a strong start to the year. Thank you to all the families who came out in great numbers to pick up materials to start school. Also, a big welcome to our Center Pepin kindergarteners, who took part in kindergarten screenings on September 14-15 under tents on school grounds. Our wonderful kindergarten students had the opportunity to meet with the teachers and the para-educators assigned to their classrooms using predetermined outdoor safety protocols. In the next few weeks, Center Pepin's Chromebooks will be arriving, and we will be asking families to pick one up for your child. All students in Grades K-4 will receive a **new** Chromebook for school use. We will also provide hotspots to families who need one. For your information, hotspots will not improve an existing wifi connection. When you come to pick up or exchange for the new device, please bring your child's completed health form and free/reduced lunch application that were given out during the initial materials pick up.

Streamlining communication is necessary in order for schools and families to organize a remote learning program. It is crucial that parent/caregiver contact information including emails and telephone numbers are kept up-to-date and messages are checked regularly. If you have a change in contact information, please call or email the school and we will update your information in our system. This way you will be kept in the loop about district, school, and classroom information we send out. We will continue to communicate with families using email, phone, and Remind, a texting service purchased by our school district.

All classes will utilize *Google Classroom* as a platform to provide assignments and resources, assign due dates, deliver feedback, and determine grades. Teachers will work with students and families to provide daily plans for both synchronous and asynchronous activities. As you have probably realized by now, your Center Pepin student's school day looks much different than it did this past spring. Every student in Grades K-4 follows a set schedule, which includes a mix of live or synchronous teaching and self-paced or asynchronous teaching and learning. All students are required to attend and participate in all scheduled remote activities, both synchronous and asynchronous. For synchronous learning, attendance is defined as video on, students facing the screen, engaging in class activities. For asynchronous learning, attendance is monitored by submitting completed work as assigned. Teachers will clearly articulate expectations regarding synchronous and asynchronous activities. Students will receive grades and a report card using a trimester schedule. Specific expectations will be established by each teacher with respect to assignments, due dates, and grading. We encourage you to contact your

*A great place to learn and grow.*

child's teacher whenever you have questions or concerns or wish to share information regarding your child's progress.

New content will be taught in all subject areas using curriculum aligned with Massachusetts State standards. For reasons of consistency, teachers will utilize a common set of tools with a limited number of user accounts and passwords for parents and students to keep track of. Zoom will continue to be used for synchronous learning. Students will participate in whole class and small group instruction using Zoom. Students may also participate in break out rooms in Zoom. A note about Zoom Breakout Rooms: student-to-student dialogues are often used in our classes to foster social-emotional and academic growth. We call these strategies 'turn and talks,' 'pair shares,' and other collaborative terms. To replicate this practice in remote learning, educators will sometimes place students in Zoom breakout rooms in small groups of two or more students. Classroom teachers and other elementary educators will drop into the rooms to listen to, participate in, and guide the student conversations. During the activity, students will have specific goals to accomplish, but may not be under the virtual supervision of an educator for short periods of time. The teachers will rotate through the rooms, then bring all students back to the main session to share ideas from the small group discussions. We look forward to continuing to share how our in-person learning best practices will translate to a remote learning environment. Some of the digital resources you might see your children working on from their Google Classrooms are *STAR Assessment, Freckle, Zearn, Math Investigations, Reading A-Z/Raz-Kids, Epic, History's Mysteries, Collaborative Classroom: Caring School Community, Making Meaning, Being a Writer, SIPPS (Systematic Instruction in Phonological Awareness, Phonics, and Sight Words), Teaching Tolerance, Mystery Science, Khan Academy*, among others. During remote learning, all special education services will be provided using the 'instruction *and* services' mode of delivery. In addition, social emotional supports are available to students who need them.

The Kindergarten teachers were very excited to meet their students during the screening. Kindergarten will gradually introduce curriculum for reading and writing. The students will be using *Zearn* and *Freckle* to help support with early math skills. Teachers will begin by focusing on number identification for numbers 1-5. They will introduce authentic children's literature to help build the concept of 'all about me' (learning names of friends), and to help support student's social emotional skills. Kindergarten will be using the learning platform, Google Classroom. This is where your child's classroom teacher will post daily assignments as well as where you can find the Zoom links to your child's whole group/small group learning times.

Center Pepin first graders have been learning how to operate Zoom, creating rules for meetings, and learning about all the people in our classrooms. We will slowly move into our Google Classrooms in the next few weeks. The teachers have enjoyed meeting with families in the afternoons. If you have not yet made an appointment with your child's first grade teacher, please email. Grade 2 teachers would like to commend their students on the amazing job they are doing following the Zoom Rules and the school schedule. It has been wonderful for our Grade 2 teachers to see all of you on Zoom each day. We have so much learning to do that we need to make sure we have prepared our daily workspace with all the tools we need before we get started. Grade 2's focus for the next couple weeks is to make sure that we have all our equipment running or at least know what to do if we run into any issues. We will also be making sure students are creating a toolbox of supplies and keeping them organized so they can easily access them during lessons. It is important that we establish a strong Zoom classroom community to ensure that the upcoming months are filled with learning, laughter, and lots of patience when things do not run quite the way we would like them too. The second grade team is ready to learn and it sure seems like the students are too.

Grade 3 will be focusing the first two weeks on community building and "getting to know you" activities. It is very important to have all the students feel comfortable and safe in the new virtual classrooms. Third graders will begin each day with a morning meeting, followed by either science or social studies. Math will be the focus in the second block of learning before lunch. After lunch, Grade 3 will spend time on reading and writing utilizing our *Making Meaning* and *Being a Writer* curriculum. Please reach out to your child's teacher through *Remind* if you have any questions. The fourth grade focus right now is building relationships with students, building community, and establishing virtual classroom norms and routines. Students are learning how to navigate Zoom and Google Classroom so that they can actively participate in class discussions, find resources, and complete assignments. The goal is to help students increase their independence in these areas so that we can move forward in the coming weeks in our academics. So far students have been working hard and have been very flexible. Keep up the great work.

During remote learning, student attendance will be monitored and recorded. Teachers will take attendance for instructional periods and report it as they would if the students were attending school in person. We will confirm that students participated in at least half of each day's scheduled structured learning time activities, defined as time during in which students are engaged in regularly scheduled instruction, learning activities, or learning assessments within the curriculum for study of the 'core subjects' and 'other subjects.' In addition to classroom time where both teachers and students are present, structured learning time may include directed study, independent study, technology-assisted learning, presentations, and assessments. A member of the school staff will reach out to families of students who are absent for multiple days to identify the reason for absence and provide support accordingly.

The faculty at Center Pepin recognizes that students' social and emotional needs may be significantly different at the start of this school year than in previous years. Working with trainers from *Collaborative Classroom*, our staff has intentionally planned for beginning-of-year instruction in the 2020–2021 school year that attends to the academic, social, and emotional needs of the school community. We will be using a program called *Caring School Community*. This program was designed to help students become caring, responsible members of their school communities and ultimately grow into humane, principled, and skilled citizens of a democratic society. The program focuses on building relationships with and among students, teaching social skills, creating calm and orderly learning environments, and helping students acquire self-discipline. The lessons emphasize building community and relationships, while giving teachers tools to have hard conversations. Students and adults will spend time getting to know and appreciate one another and learn about each other's interests, opinions, and ideas while treating one another with care and respect.

During the past two weeks School Psychologist, Christina Howard, Special Education Teacher, Heather Dean and School Counselor, Riane Dermody have been working together with Maple School staff to create videos for the Center Pepin YouTube channel. These videos are provided to help students in the beginning of the school year. Some videos include how to set up a workstation at home, how to get your brain ready for online learning, how to respect your caregiver's needs, and more. Here is the link: [https://youtu.be/\\_FX2GoB8soc](https://youtu.be/_FX2GoB8soc) The SEL staff is also working on a website for families and teachers to use. It is currently under construction and content will be updated often. There are resources and information regarding social emotional learning. For more information please email [rdermody@epsd.us](mailto:rdermody@epsd.us). Here is the link to the site: <https://sites.google.com/epsd.us/epsdelementaryoutreach/home>

As a school community, we partner with families and caregivers, especially during remote learning. We would like to increase opportunities for building family partnerships by inviting interested parents and caregivers to attend School Council meetings. School Council members assist and advise the principal, plan goals for the school, identify needs, and provide input for School Improvement Plans. We would like to recognize our returning members: parents and community members, Kara Murrett, Naomi Schmidt, Megan Kelly-Bagg, and Emily McDowell, and staff members in addition to the principal and assistant principal, Amy Gauger, Amy Skowron, Heather Dean, and Kelly Prezekopowski. We appreciate these individuals being involved in our school community in this way. Our first school council meeting is Monday, October 5, 2020 at 4:30. We encourage parents or caregivers to attend and will partake in a share out at the beginning of our meeting.

A message from our Elementary Parent/Teacher Organization (PTO): Easthampton PTO would love some new parents and guardians to join this year! What is PTO? PTO is a group of parents, guardians, and teachers who work together to plan and implement fundraising events that bring families together for fun and community building. We meet monthly on the first Tuesday of the month from 6:30-7:30. This year we are meeting on Zoom until it is safe to meet again in person. We use the money we make from fundraising to help pay for enrichment events for students. Some of the enrichment events we have funded in the past have been visits from Tom Ricardi and his birds of prey and other in- school performances and plays. We have also helped to fund field trips and an annual teacher appreciation breakfast at the end of the school year. In previous years some of our events have included arranging kindergarten playdates before school starts, gingerbread house making night in December, movie and pizza nights in the winter months, pancake breakfast in the spring, and an end of the year ice cream social. Parents can help as much or as little as they are able, including attending meetings and helping with planning and fundraising, or by volunteering at events like helping to make popcorn at movie night or helping to pass out food at our spring pancake breakfast. One thing families can do right away is sign up for Amazon Smile. Just go to your Amazon account and select “Your Charity” near the top of the page. Write in “Easthampton Home and School Association” and a small percentage of your sales will be donated to our PTO. We would greatly appreciate it! We welcome parents to join and we love new ideas. Please consider joining the PTO, it is a great way to improve your child’s school and to get involved in a positive way. Please follow this link to fill out our google form to select how you are able to help out with PTO this year.

[https://docs.google.com/forms/d/1M8BF\\_O8StrH6rVxEGDhkihVgvsseA0bXJOpI\\_EbILek/edit](https://docs.google.com/forms/d/1M8BF_O8StrH6rVxEGDhkihVgvsseA0bXJOpI_EbILek/edit)

We take pride in our school. Students are encouraged to show their Eagle spirit, even on Zoom! We realize that remote teaching and learning is not easy and remains a hardship for many families and caregivers. We are committed to providing all Center Pepin students with the highest quality learning opportunities available. Please remember that we value your contribution of ideas to our school community. We look forward to your continued participation and will welcome your emails and suggestions.

Sincerely,

Dr. Jill S. Pasquini-Torchia  
Principal

Andrea McCallum  
Assistant Principal