

# What's Buzzing at Independence Elementary STEM

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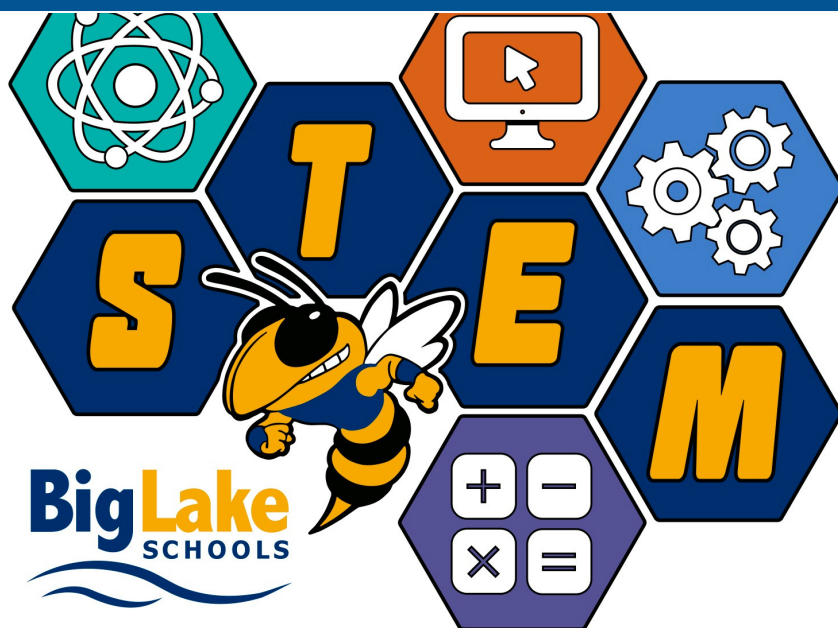
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## Distance Learning 2.0

As most of you know, we will be moving into distance learning beginning December 1, 2020. You recently heard Superintendent Truebenbach talk about Distance Learning 2.0. Our teachers have been working tirelessly to ensure that our distance learning model is rigorous, engaging, and effective in delivering distance learning instruction. Below are differences that you will see from distance learning last spring to Distance Learning 2.0.

### **1:1 Devices**

We are so very thankful for our Tech Team and their work to ensure all our Indy students are equipped with a chromebook to utilize in any of our learning models. With all our students having the same type of device,

this allows us the ability to better support our students and families with their tech questions and are able to better problem-solve any tech issues that may arise. If you find that you are running into any technical difficulties, including wi-fi issues, please email our Tech Team at [Takeout@biglakeschools.org](mailto:Takeout@biglakeschools.org).

### **Seesaw**

Last year we linked all of our lessons and activities directly to our website. We found that this was not always user-friendly and led to some technical difficulties. Therefore, this year we purchased Seesaw to use in all our classrooms in all our learning models. Teachers have been using Seesaw in their classrooms and with our families since our very first day of school this year. They have spent these past few months teaching students how to use this tool so that they have all the skills they need to successfully navigate this platform while in distance learning. If you as parents have any questions with Seesaw or need support with the parent app, please contact your child's teacher.

### **Days Designated to Core Classes vs. Specials**

Based on parent feedback, we heard that sometimes having every class every day was overwhelming for both parents and students. Therefore, this year, students will be engaged with their teachers in their core classes (Math, ELA, Science, and Social Studies) on Mondays - Thursdays. Fridays will be designated to their Specials classes (Music, PE, Art, Launch, and Engineering). All instruction will come via Seesaw for all of their courses.

### **Increase of Rigor and Support**

You heard Superintendent Truebenbach describe last year's distance learning as "crisis learning". We were all learning together how to best navigate this new way of learning and therefore, our focus was more on learning the logistics and exploring different systems. Now that we are more secure in our processes and procedures, families can expect higher expectations and more rigor in student learning. We have also learned better ways to support our students. Instead of our teachers holding virtual office hours, they will instead be scheduling one-on-one or small group zoom sessions to be able to provide more individual instruction and support.

### **Social-Emotional Support**

Distance learning is difficult for everyone. For most people, this is not how we want to do school. We know that students miss seeing their friends and teachers everyday. Therefore, we have set aside times each day for students to connect with their teachers and peers through our morning and afternoon meetings. We also will be continuing with our weekly supports from our Social Workers that are integrated into our morning presentations with our students. If you feel that you are in need of additional supports for your child, please reach out to your child's classroom teacher.

## ***Attendance***

During distance learning, our teachers will take attendance daily and for two periods. This is different from distance learning last Spring. This year, students must show evidence of direct interaction in both their ELA/Social Studies class as well as their Math/Science class each day to be marked present for both periods each day during distance learning. Examples of direct interaction during distance learning may include:

- Participation in a 1-1, or small group or whole class online session with the teacher.
- Completion and submission of assignments on Seesaw.
- Completion and submission of assigned tests or quizzes.
- Time logged onto an online platform such as iXL (if assigned by the teacher).
- Work turned in on a certain day along with daily student or parent contact.

Teachers will mark students absent with whom they have had no direct interaction during a given day. Teachers will mark attendance each morning for the previous day to accommodate families who may need to support distance learning in the evening. Additionally, if your family needs an alternate attendance plan, please reach out to your child's homeroom teacher. We are able to provide flexibility so long as the channels of communication remain open. If your student will be "absent" from distance learning, please report the absence directly to your student's teacher. Do not use the attendance line or email address during distance learning. Absences will be excused in alignment with the information in the student handbook (page 9). Our goal for attendance is student safety and success. Please reach out to your student's teacher with any questions regarding attendance.

## ***Enrichment Opportunities***

Beginning the week of December 14th, we will be offering additional clubs and enrichment opportunities for our students. Students will have the option to participate in as many as they would like and that work well for their schedules. These clubs may include activities around STEM, music, physical education, and other fun opportunities. More details will be coming as we get closer to our start dates!

# Setting up a Successful Learning Space

Students will be starting their day on December 1st learning how to set up successful learning spaces. We would appreciate your help in setting up this space for your child. Things to consider are:

- An area to work that would include enough space for all their materials, chromebook, and a place to keep their chromebook charged.
- An area that is free from other distractions such as TVs, other electronics, or distracting family members or pets.
- An area that is conducive to your child's learning--either quiet or with calm background music.
- Couches or beds are not great spaces.

Having this space prepared and ready to go by December 1st, the start of our Distance Learning, will help get your child started on the right foot!

# PBIS

Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports

## Full School Wide Implementation

As was shared in our last newsletter, we moved to a full school-wide implementation of PBIS this year. As a result, our PBIS team gets to participate in a two-year cohort that will provide continuous training to ensure a strong implementation. Our PBIS model allows us to ensure all our staff are trained in positively recognizing behaviors, implementing proactive and preventative procedures though consistent building-wide expectations, and development consistent procedures for classroom-managed vs. office-managed behaviors.



We are seeking to have a parent representation on our PBIS team. Our team meets one Thursday a month from 7:50am - 8:35am. We are currently meeting virtually. Once we return to in-person meetings, our parent rep would have the option of joining us in-person or continuing to meet via zoom. If you are interested in being a PBIS rep for Independence, please contact Mrs. Deavel at [j.deavel@biglakeschools.org](mailto:j.deavel@biglakeschools.org)

## STAR Testing



A tool that we use to gather benchmarking data, as well as progress monitor students' progress, is an assessment tool known as STAR. Students take the STAR test on their chromebooks at a minimum of four times a year. Students may take this while in distance learning and if so, information will be shared with families prior to those testing days. A quiet place without distractions is necessary for our STAR assessments. If you have questions around the STAR assessment, please contact your child's teacher.

*We are grateful to many community partners for very gracious donations to support our teachers and students:*

*Dairy Queen, Subway, Coborns, Target, Caribou Coffee, Minnco, and Grind Nutrition! Thank you so very much!*

## Order Your Saliva Tests



Minnesota Department of Health is now offering free Covid-19 saliva tests to all families. For more information on how to order your free test, please go to <https://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/testsites/athome.html>.

# Important Dates



- No School on November 25th - November 30th due to Thanksgiving Break and Changing Models.
- STAR Testing will occur in Reading & Math at some point December 1-11th. Teacher will be in contact with more information.
- No School on December 4th due to Teacher Professional Development.
- Trimester 1 Report Cards will be accessible on December 11th.
- No School December 24th - January 1st for Winter Break.