



**George R. Martin
Elementary School**

445 Cole Street
Seekonk, MA 02771
(508) 336-7558



BART LUSH
Principal

KERRY HUTCHINS
Assistant Principal

March 24, 2020

Dear Aitken and Martin Families:

We hope everyone is doing well and staying healthy! We miss being at the school and we especially miss seeing all of the students. There have been some short positive messages showing up on social media and the web. These are some of the most important ones we found that we wanted to share with you.

- ***YOUR KIDS ARE GOING TO BE FINE.***
- ***You don't have to recreate school at home.***
- ***Love your kids.***
- ***Be their safe place.***
- ***Read, create, play, sing, and talk together.***
- ***Be kind***
- ***Be safe***
- ***Work hard***

Our district has created a contact list for each of our two schools to help you quickly find your child's teacher to send them a message via email.

Aitken Elementary School Staff Email List

Each individual's name is linked to their respective emails. Please email any of the staff members with questions or concerns.

Principal	Assistant Principal	Administrative Assistant
John Haidemenos,	Dave Graf	Heather Travers: Admin Asst Lisa Vicente: Admin Asst
Kindergarten	Grade One	Grade Two

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Jennifer Wentworth	Sharon Ahern	Barbara Manickas
Jennifer Boudreau	Jessica Trudeau	Joann Rondeau
Sarah Mooney	Lynn Owens	Karen Medeiros
Sylvia Smith	Maryellen Lane	Pre-K: Michelle Halpin
Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5
Jeanne McCormick	Rachel Germain	Courtney Sansoucy
Tiffany Lacroix	Lori McNally	Tyla Martin
Melissa Thurber	Elizabeth Jensen	Erin Cetenich
Jill Waldman	Jennifer Schwab	Becky Abrams
Lisa Blackbird	Library/Media Audrey Lamar	Josh Benevides
Art Jackie Glum	Music Brandi Poirier	Physical Education Earl Queenan
Reading Specialist Joanna Rioux	Reading Recovery/DI Suzanne Ward-Smith	Nurse Jessica Devane
Technology Teacher Beth Haselton	School Psychologist Karen Cicatiello	Adjustment Counselor Tara Haggerty
Occupational Therapist Gina Alexander	Speech & Language Pathologist Ellen Corvin	Speech & Language Pathologist Haley Harrington
	English Language Learners Teacher Caroline Haley	

Martin Elementary School Staff Email List

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Principal	Assistant Principal	Administrative Assistant
Bart Lush	Kerry Hutchins	Mrs. King Mrs. Marulis
Kindergarten	Grade One	Grade Two
Mrs. Archambault	Mrs. Maynard	Mrs. Patch
Mrs. Churchill	Ms. Olean	Mrs. Braganca
Mrs. Miguel	Ms. Steitz	Mrs. King

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Mrs. Weissinger	Mrs. Sloat	Special Ed Mrs. Dyson
Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5
Mrs. Bahry	Mrs. Balasco	Mrs. Dailey
Mrs. Hopkins	Ms. Carvalho	Mrs. Medeiros
Ms. St. Jacques	Mrs. Sceeles Ms. Behan	Mrs. Soderlund
Special Ed Mrs. Gouveia - Mrs. Provost	Special Ed Mrs. Kimball	Special Ed Mrs. Apuzzo
Special Ed Mrs. Mahoney	Library/Media Mindy Andrews	Special Ed Mrs. Roach - Mr. Wilson
Art Ms. Walsh	STARS Ms. Murray	Physical Education Mrs. Swick
Reading Specialist Mrs. Rielly / Mrs. Sarasin	Reading Recovery/DI Mrs. Prazeres / Ms. Hawkins	Nurse Mrs. McLintock
Technology Teacher Beth Haselton	School Psychologist Mrs. Bruce	Occupational Therapist Ms. Lundstrom / Ms. Lombardi
Adjustment Counselor Mr. Schenck	Speech & Language Pathologist Katie Michienzi	Speech & Language Pathologist Alison Springer
Music Mr. Koehler	English Language Learners Teacher Mr. Faria	STARS Ms. Albernaz
PreK Mrs. Clough	Flex Mr. Queenan	Flex Cheryl Kenney

At a meeting held yesterday with principals, the Seekonk Educators Association, and the Superintendent, the district's new "Distance Learning Plan" was shared. This is the road map that teachers and staff will be using to communicate regularly with families, including assigning learning activities, and facilitating general check-ins with students and families.

This week we have three goals; 1. Reach out to families and keep them connected to student learning, 2. Provide opportunity or pathways to strengthen skills already taught, 3. Provide enrichment. These three goals should maintain school readiness and a connection with learning. We want students to be able to return to school prepared. This week, nothing is mandatory for students and work is not being graded. The following week, be on the lookout for new lessons from the teachers.

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During this time we want to remain connected to our students and their feelings. Our school counselors, social workers, nurses, school psychologists, and other educators are available to support families. Some of our special educators will be working collaboratively with our grade level and content area teachers; they are also available to students and families to offer support and academic assistance. Our specialists will be working with classroom teachers building the best pathway for growth so that our students can be successful. We are confident that our work will continue to support all students.

This can be an especially hard time when your child asks questions about why they are not in school, or convey fear about the virus. Dr. Drolet came across this article that may be helpful when discussing things related to this current crisis.

Dear Parents, Guardians and Child care-givers,

As I sit in 'self-imposed isolation' at my laptop and feel on my skin what many Americans may be feeling during this challenging time, perhaps I can be helpful, drawing from nearly thirty years of experience guiding parents when their families face difficult times.

I have always believed that in a crisis lies opportunities for strengthening families, amplifying children's coping skills and promoting resilience.

I hope that by sharing with you some strategies that have helped children and families cope with crises, acute and chronic, you may be more fortified to cope with uncertainties ahead and will gain some measure of inner peace and community perspective- both will inform our ways going forward.

*First, let's remember - coping with **change** is hard for most people. Not being able to plan for next week or even next month is uniquely hard. When we are required to face the unknown, not be in control, it's normal for all of us, adults and children, to feel out of sync, hard to settle- psychological term is 'emotional dis-regulation'.*

*Here's what I have learned helps us and our families feel more calm, less irritable, as we learn incrementally how to **live with the change of feeling isolated and 'too together' all at once.***

1. Your children are actively paying attention to how you feel, talk and behave.

Even very young children look to you first to know whether they should worry or not. They listen to your words, your tone, watch your actions, react to your moods. They eavesdrop on your communications with others and come to their own (often mistaken) conclusions.

That said, it's pretty safe to assume that this pandemic is unique to all our experiences. It's normal that as information is updated hourly, and recommendations change daily, adults may feel that our world is upside down and inside out- our anxiety is normal.

What CAN you do about it?

Talking with another caring adult about your feelings is helpful (out of the children's earshot); reminding yourself of other times in your life when you have felt anxious and uncertain about the future can be reassuring; creating a plan for your family just for today and tomorrow may be productive and doable- looking further down the road may not be possible and lead you to feel more out of control.

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2. Create a routine for the day. Even a schedule, for example, when we will play together, and time to play independently. (Of course, this will depend on your child's age and capacity to play alone. A timer works well here). Time for family mealtimes, clean up, predictable bedtimes, nap times (for both kids and grown ups), some form of exercise, indoors or if possible, in your backyard.

Other planned time for reading, screen time, family movie time, game time.
If children are old enough, and you have enough bandwidth, opportunities to help with meal preparation, clean up.

3. Limit your own access to media coverage.

Information, when delivered calmly and by a trustworthy source, typically helps us feel more in control. It's necessary to be informed so that we can keep up with the changes and required adjustments. That said, a steady diet of news, 24/7, creates its own layer of stress. Decide when and how often you will get your information from media sources. Choose from a host of other more soothing 'background electronic wallpapers' that may even entertain, inspire, educate. It is said that music 'calms the savage beast within'..... I have my music faves playing on Spotify as I write this.

4. Talk with your children about changes only as they affect your family's day-to-day living.

Children by nature are egocentric.; for instance, "How will this affect me?" Knowing the new rules of the road for this unique family experience is important. Simple explanations are best. Letting children ask questions as they arise, rather than prompting them, or assuming their feelings, is helpful. Try not to anticipate how their lives may be affected weeks or months from now. It's about today.

5. Development matters. How your child understands and reacts to new information from you will vary but their age and stage will help guide you to understand their reaction(s):

***Very young children, 3-6 years old,** require only the simplest of explanations about what's happening today as it affects them... Remember that routines are reassuring to everyone, especially toddlers and preschoolers. "Mommy is working at home today," is enough for many children.

***Early elementary age children** may have more questions and concerns about the pandemic than their younger siblings. Let them lead you with their questions; answer simply and clearly, always reminding them that **it's your job to keep the family safe. Although the virus is unlikely to affect your family, you may make decisions to protect others in your community.** (great lesson)

Words like 'contagious, social distancing, quarantines', may be unfamiliar to them. It's important to speak in a reassuring way that is clear and simple.; for example, "Staying home from school and work keeps the virus from spreading so we will be doing that. It just makes sense."

Or, "I need to work from home and you have school work as well. Let's talk about a plan for the rest of the day."

***Late elementary/middle school children** may worry about their older and extended family members, or threatening financial situations. They may feel it's 'unfair' if their friends are allowed to gather in small groups but you have said no. Remind them that your rules are for their health and the health of others who may be more impacted; each family makes their own decisions for their own family's well being.

***Adolescents** are able to understand the unlikely but possible negative health and financial impact that the Corona virus may have on their family, their community, both local and national.

That said, cancelled school may sound terrific at first but it carries with it cancelled sport seasons, plays and concerts they have rehearsed for months, anticipated school vacation trips. Without school and after school activities, they may feel depressed and anxious, isolated from their friends and routines. We know that adolescents fantasize about their 'immortality'; be sure to concretize the risks of 'not physically distancing' and that they need to trust

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you to make the rules that will keep them safe from harm. Expect them to express their understandable disappointment, anger, confusion, worry, etc. (More) moodiness is pretty normal.

When you acknowledge their feelings and not attempt to minimize them, they may be able to sit with them, and even surprise you – by problem-solving ways to adapt? Isn't that what we want for our adolescents?

6. Consider the marathon, not the sprint

Drawing from my experience post-Katrina, Columbine, and 9/11, the first days and weeks of the crisis summon up enormous amounts of energy (albeit it anxious) in all of us. We listen and react to our leaders, both local and national, health care providers, educators and community helpers as they develop emergency plans, roll out procedures and problem-solve.

*If history informs, I expect that very shortly, we will collectively feel as though we have hit a 'wall of exhaustion' as we sort out how to **sustain** difficult, if not, seemingly impossible changes in our families' lives, no matter how long these changes last. We grieve our lives before and yearn for them.*

Taking care for ourselves now seems prudent. Today. You know how.... practice healthy sleep hygiene, mindful breathing (five minutes a day is all it takes!), move our bodies, rest our minds, use technology to connect with others, discover ways to laugh, find meaning in sacrifice.

Maria Trozzi, M.Ed

Author, **Talking with Children About Loss**, Penguin-Putnam
Co-Founder, Good Grief Program at Boston Medical Center
Assistant Professor of Pediatrics, Boston University School of Medicine
Program Director, Joanna's Place
Psychotherapist/Grief and Resilience Specialist

Finally, as always, please reach out to us with any questions or concerns.

Thanks very much,

Mr. Lush

Mr. Haidemenos

Mrs. Hutchins

Mr. Graf

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