



Mears Middle School

Panther Pride News

Respect, Responsibility, Creativity, and Academic Excellence

Friday, March 20, 2020

We Are In This Together



Mears Families,

On behalf of Mears teachers and staff, I want to begin this newsletter by extending our heartfelt greetings to all of our students and their families. It goes without saying that we miss our students tremendously and look forward to reconnecting with them as soon as possible.

As you are all well aware, the challenges we all face as a result of the coronavirus have brought about unprecedented change and disruption to our normal lives and

routines. The closure of our schools, which is estimated to be impacting 38 million students nationwide, is but one of countless examples that show how severely the landscape has been altered by the health risks of Covid-19.

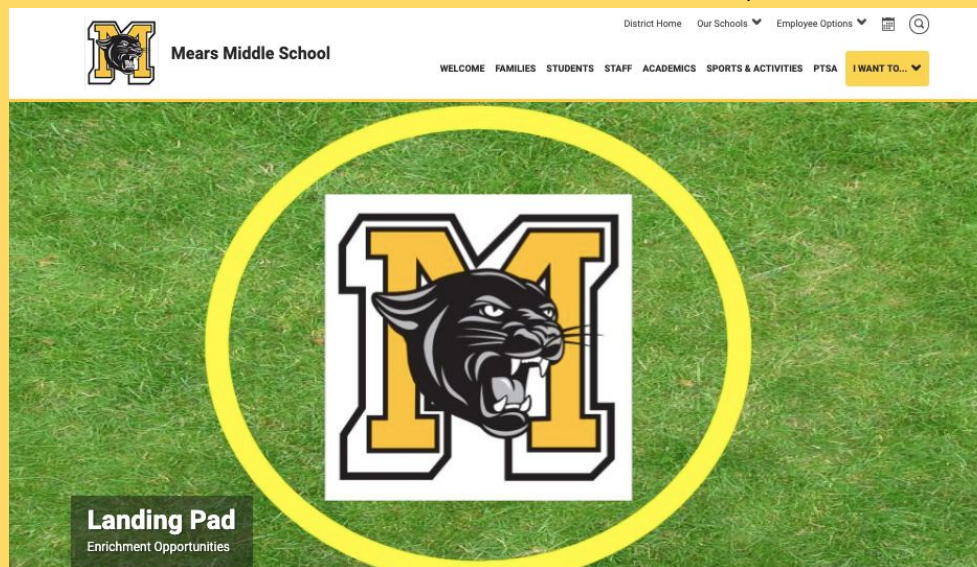
At Mears, and throughout Anchorage School District, spent a good deal of time this week reaching out to make personal connections with our families. Maintaining strong relationships with our students and their families remains our highest priority. Our teachers and staff deeply value the conversations we had with our families and students. We especially wish to express our sincere concern for all of those in our community who are grappling with uncertainty related to childcare, food security, health, social and emotional wellbeing, and unemployment. Please know that we are doing all that we can, with assistance from district leadership, to address these needs as best we can.

The screenshot photo above was taken by a staff member on Friday morning during a Mears staff meeting. To better ensure the safety and health of teachers and staff, we are all meeting remotely now by Zoom video conference. Families and students should be aware that a tremendous amount of work is being done, despite our inability to meet in person at school. Instead, we are meeting regularly as a whole staff, as well as in departments and teams. Similarly, district leadership are meeting on a daily basis, doing our best to attend to immediate needs, as well as preparing for our next steps as a school and district.

This edition of *Panther Pride News* contains some of the results of the work we have done as a staff to prepare for another week of mandated school closure, March 23-27, and the possibility of the introduction of online learning in the weeks to follow.

To all of our students and families, we miss you and look forward to returning to a routine focused on teaching and learning as soon as we are able. Take care of yourselves and know that your teachers and the entire staff at Mears care about you a great deal. --Eric

Mears Introduces Enrichment Activities for the week of March 23-27, 2020



For the week of March 23-27, Mears teachers have organized a landing pad of enrichment opportunities. The information, which includes educational activities from all departments, is located on the homepage of the [Mears Middle School Website](#). Once there, just click on the “landing pad,” which will take you to the page with all Mears’ academic departments. With the help of Mears librarian, Ms. Heather Fleming, teachers have uploaded a number of fun and engaging activities that are designed to keep our students active and engaged. For the coming week, none of these activities are required by teachers, nor will they be graded. Rather, they are recommended opportunities for students to continue their learning and growth while the school and district prepare for the coming weeks.

Announcements:

In her most recent letter to the ASD community, Dr. Deena Bishop, Superintendent, focused on the services that are available for students and families.

Health Services

For students requiring nursing support, please coordinate with ASD Health Services at 907-742-4136 or email healthcareservices@asdk12.org. The District wants to provide any support possible to students who may be high risk according to CDC guidelines.

Student Nutrition

ASD Student Nutrition will continue food distribution of pre-packaged breakfast and lunch meals for any child 18 or younger at established food service sites. Mobile food service routes will remain scheduled to accommodate students and families unable to access the school distribution sites. Information on feeding sites and mobile bus route meal drop off can be accessed at this link: <https://www.asdk12.org/Page/15121>.

Educational Resources

Over these two weeks, ASD is focusing on supplemental learning activities for students. This will not take the place of regular classroom instruction, and therefore assignments will not be required or graded during this time. However, they are important, and we encourage you to engage in learning with your child. The Family Resources link (<https://www.asdk12.org/Page/15108>) on the ASD COVID-19 website includes Educational Resources. This is meant to give families ideas and activities that they can do at home during the two-week closure. In addition to the District website, teachers will share supplemental learning activities with their students and families. ASD teachers have been working hard connecting with their students and families to assess readiness to continue educational activities during the school closure period.

As of today, ASD staff has logged over 41,000 phone calls to families! Here is some of the information that ASD has gathered:

- 91 percent of households report adequate childcare during school closure time
- 87 percent of households have high speed internet at home
- 4 percent have no internet at home

In regard to devices:

- 41 percent have a desktop computer at home
- 70 percent have a laptop computer at home
- 57 percent have a tablet at home
- 69 percent have smartphone with data
- 5 percent have no devices at home
- 65 percent can print at home

Evidenced by the data, some families have multiple devices.

ASD and its schools will use this information moving forward should we need to develop longer-term plans for distance learning across the District.

Stay Informed/Get Involved

Mears Parents and Guardians

3/23 - 3/27: School remains closed at the order of the Governor and the State of Alaska. Families and students are encouraged to access the Launching Pad on Mears website for optional educational enrichment activities. More information will follow regarding plans for the week of March 30 and beyond. Stay tuned.

⇐Backman Recommends⇒



Here's a great article published by National Geographic, which is focused on some of the things parents can do at home with their kids to make the most of the coronavirus shutdowns.

[Keeping Kids Occupied at Home During Coronavirus](#)

Here's an incredible new resource that includes an extensive collection of online educational resources for families and students during this time.

[Amazing Educational Resources](#)



Mears Middle School Anchorage, AK

PTSA

ART CONTEST

In an effort to promote fun activities at home during this challenging time, Alaska PTA is having a weekly Art Contest. Next week they are having a virtual spirit week. Go to <https://www.facebook.com/akpta49/> to see more info.

Week 1 Theme: CHEERFUL



PTSA Advocating for our students.

During Spring Break your President, April Eide, and 2nd VP, Lisa Jackson, were in Washington, D.C. representing Mears PTSA and ALaska PTA. We attended the Annual National PTA Legislative Conference. During this visit we met with our Senators and Congressman with 2 ASKS. Those ASKS were 1. Add Schools to all infrastructure Bills, 2. Reinstate Children's Nutritional Act and Anti-Lunch Shaming and 3. Additional Funding for Statewide Family Engagement Centers. As came at a time of wide spread Coronavirus. We will continue to update on these ASKS when the time is right. We even had a visit from Melania Trump. More on that next week. Let us know if you have any questions regarding our Conference. mearsms.ptsa@gmail.com or follow us on facebook.

Memory Books online ordering www.ybpay.com \$35

Order today. Don't delay and be the parent that your student didn't get a memory book. NEW this year - you can personalize the memory book with your student's name. Its an additional \$5. Order online and receive a free wall calendar or easel from Shutterfly.

Personalization deadline is April 6. Pre Orders without personalization are due May 15th. We will only have 400 books for sale. This includes the presales. Currently, we have sold 170 books.

Make checks payable to Mears PTSA or pay with a credit card online www.ybpay.com

Engagement at Home



This week, Mears 7th grader, Rocco Spicola, attempted to take over the world in the board game, RISK.

What kinds of cool things are your students up to at home?

Send me photos of your students engaged in fun, creative, engaging activities at home.

backman_eric@asdk12.org

I will try to highlight what our students are up to in future issues of *Panther Pride News*. --Eric

Mears Middle School Mission

Through teamwork and cooperation, all students become partners in their own educational progress, fostering self-respect, responsibility and integrity.

[Mears Middle School Website](#)