Online Learning, Social Isolation, and Cyberbullying

The coronavirus (COVID-19) has taken the world by storm and disrupted so many aspects of our lives. The safety of our children and their families is our first priority. With everyone now receiving instruction online, students can’t readily stop by the guidance counselor’s or the social worker office, or chat with a teacher after class, or let their coach know about what’s troubling them and affecting their sports play (since youth sports are shut down too).

This is a big deal. I’m reminded of the quote by an educator Nicholas Ferroni, who wrote “Students who are loved come to school to learn, and students who aren’t, come to school to be loved.” This will largely go missing over the remainder of the school year unless we are intentional about it. I want to **keep in touch with all students somehow**! I also want to **remind you all that I am here for you**if you need anything, and do not hesitate to ask for help. More importantly, **I am here for those few that I know need that connection, those encouraging words, that accountability, and that check-in**.

 I absolutely understand the importance of social distancing during this unprecedented, scary time. Honestly, we are trapped right now in our homes. But we need to be creative to make sure our students don’t suffer from extremes of isolation. First off, parents, **be patient with them if they start to get irritable and frustrating**. Second, I encourage parents to **allow and support them video chatting and FaceTiming their friends, and maybe even a few social media apps**. Even during social isolation, please remember socializing and connecting with their friends is essential for continued healthy development in the midst of the chaos and uncertainty all around us. Now, just because students are privileged to interact and communicate on these different social media apps, DOES NOT give any child the right to cyber bully another student. Even though we are not physical present in school, bullying, under no circumstances will still not be tolerated.

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