*GCES Kindergarten Guide for Families*

*Edition 1, Summer 2020*

**Getting Ready for Kindergarten: Technology**

Last Thursday, the Board of Education voted to begin school virtually through January 28, 2021.

As we plan for virtual learning for the 2020-21 school year, we have the advantage of experience gleaned during the 4th quarter of last school year. We know that our immediate concern must be to ensure that all our incoming students have access to wifi and a computer device.

There have also been other start-up questions asked by families who want to be ready for the start of school. This guide is devoted to providing you with information about our technology protocols that will help you to get ready for virtual learning. Additional support and training will be given closer to the start of school about how to use our hcpss.me website and Canvas.

***If my family needs wifi access and/or a computer device, how do I go about securing one for my child?***

We know that not every family has a computer, laptop or iPad device that a child can use for virtual learning activities. If this is the case for your family, email our assistant principal, Mrs. Brewrick, at Jayme\_Brewrick@hcpss.org. Give her a list of your technology needs. If you have more than one child attending GCES, you may need multiple devices – one for each child enrolled. Mrs. Brewrink will be in touch to give you directions as to when and how you can get your device and wifi.

Please note that we will not be able to allocate devices until after August 1, however, knowing how many we will need will be enormously helpful in planning, so please submit your request at your earliest convenience.

HCPSS has received permission from the Board of Education to purchase an additional 6,000 devices to meet anticipated student and staff needs. It is not necessary for you to purchase a device especially for virtual learning. Please let us know what you need so we can help your family connect.

***Does my child need a special student ID and password to access online learning?***

Each child is issued a unique HCPSS ID and password at the beginning of Kindergarten. This ID/password combination gives the student access to software platforms, including Canvas, which will be used to deliver instruction. In addition, it will give the student access to live Google Meets, through which synchronistic instruction will be delivered. The student ID/Password is the *only* way to access HCPSS instruction both during virtual learning and when we return to our school building.

You will receive the student’s ID/Password after August 1 (the start of the new school year). You will hear directly from our technology teacher, Mr. Hoffman, so look out for his email notification. Classroom teachers will not have this information before you receive it so please be patient and be on the look out for Mr. Hoffman.

***Can I help my child to learn his or her ID/password combination?***

Yes! One of the lessons we learned from 4th quarter was that the sooner a child can independently access his or her own learning modules, the more confident and settled the child will feel, and the less time you will need to spend supervising learning time. This might give you the opportunity to do your own work knowing that your child will be able to navigate online with independence.

As soon as you receive your unique ID/password, have your child practice using a keyboard. The first step is to locate the keys to spell the child’s name. The second step will be to identify a short sequence of numbers to complete the login. The sooner your child learns this routine, the easier it will be to connect with virtual learning. In addition, the ID/password will travel with your child throughout his or her education right through to 12th grade. Once it’s learned, your child will have that for along time to come!

***What is Google Meet and why do I need to know about this?***

Google Meet, part of the Google Suite, is a communication platform that we will use for synchronistic or live learning. Synchronistic learning is instruction received from the teacher in “real” time. We use Google Meet because of the security it offers. It can only be accessed through the student HCPSS ID/password and a single-use “nickname that must be used to enter the Meet. Once in the Meet, no one from outside HCPSS can access it. In addition, it allows for children to have some degree of control over their mikes to keep ambient noise to a minimum during instruction.

During 4th quarter, we did experience some technical difficulties with Google Meet. The grid function was disabled and that made it challenging to be able to see everyone. Sometimes it was difficult to connect or stay connected. We have been working with Google to rectify these problems and also to encourage Google to create software to use for small group instruction. We feel confident that our needs will be served through the improved connectivity and security that Google Meet can provide.

***How will we know how to use Google Meet?***

Meets will be scheduled and you will receive an announcement just prior to the meet that will give you the single-use nickname. Prior to the start of the school year, we are planning a series of weekly Hangouts for our kindergarten families, and this will give you a chance to use and practice the communication tool prior to the start of school. Again, this will help you to teach your child how to get on to Google Meet, which will foster some independence and self-help.

*As we move forward with our planning, we will continue to provide updates to help you prepare for the start of school. Please note that staff do not report back to work until August 24, and are checking email periodically. If you have an urgent or immediate need, please contact Ms. Holmes at* *Deborah\_Holmes@hcpss.org**, or Mrs. Brewrink at* *Jayme\_Brewrink@hcpss.org**. Thank you!*