



Altmar-Parish-Williamstown Central School District

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www.apwschools.org

September 25, 2020

APW Central School District Update

Hello parents and guardians of our APW students!

We are on day 12 of our schools being open to students – and we are so very happy to see them exit the bus or drive into our parking lots!!

I am sure that most of you are talking with your children about how their school work and/or classes are going for them. Let's not forget that **THIS IS VERY DIFFERENT and DIFFICULT** than any other school year. We are dedicated to following all CDC and Department of Health guidelines to ensure the safest and most healthy environment for our students.

We are also very dedicated to your children. The task force of 65 people who worked tirelessly over the summer to make plans for reopening felt strongly that all students needed to have the opportunity to be back in school. To accomplish this, we needed to ensure Social Distancing and Cohorts (groups of students) to limit contact with others. **This is difficult** for our students – never have they experienced the separation they are experiencing now; on the bus and in the classroom. Never have they had to put a mask on each and every time they, their teacher or another student needs to leave their desk – which happens constantly in a classroom! **This is difficult** for our young people – they are inherently social individuals who want to see their friends and talk with more than the 10 people in their class.

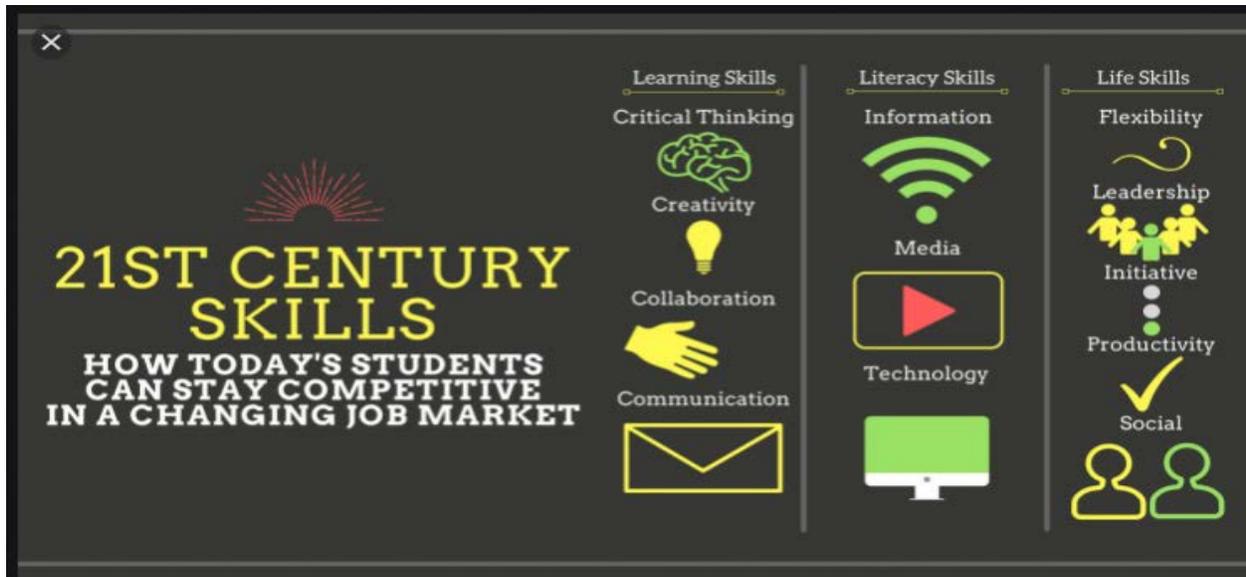
Yes, this is difficult. Therefore – I ask you to use this **very difficult time** in your child's education as a way to enhance their learning – and take the opportunity to help them learn the skills they may not have yet. This is a great chance for your children to have the opportunity to say, "Wow, that was hard, but I did it – I can take on challenges and win!" Let's all make lemonade out of the lemons we have been handed by COVID-19.

when life gives you lemons...



If you were a part of, or heard of my philosophy of education as I was being interviewed for the superintendent position, you know that ensuring every student who attends APW should leave with the 21st Century Learning Skills that all employers are demanding of new hires – yet not finding.

What are 21st Century Learning Skills??



Yes, we have NYS Standards and curriculum that students need to graduate with a NYS diploma – embedded in many of these standards are lessons which give our students the ability to solve problems at all different levels. **This is difficult** but it can also be considered the lemons that we make our lemonade with.

When I was a teacher, students would come to me and say, “I can’t get this problem to solve correctly.” or “Why did you put a check mark next to this sentence?” I would look at the students work, ultimately see where they ran into a problem and place a check mark near that spot. I worked hard to not “fix” the problem for the student – but to give them the opportunity to find out for themselves where they went wrong. This was challenging for the students. At first, I had many complaints – “What kind of teacher won’t tell you the right answer?” or “You are a terrible teacher, you won’t answer my daughter’s questions.” As time went on, my students discovered that they could answer a question with some coaching, help from a friend or a bit more time looking for the mistake noted by a check mark; they grew confident in themselves and their abilities.

Self-reliance is indeed important for all people (students) when beginning a new job or even living on their own for the first time. It is never too early to begin helping your children to learn the skills they will need “every day”. Self-reliance will also help to make school work more engaging for your student. People are much more engaged when they problem- solve for themselves rather than having someone do that for them.

Of course, we want to help you and your child through this **difficult time** and do what we can to make things easier and more productive. However, a little struggle is in your child’s best interest. Success doesn’t come easily and a little struggle now will help your child in mastering the skills that employers are looking for but just not finding in young adults.

Let's use this **difficult time** to get students to grow confident in themselves and their abilities! These ideas are for all ages (K-12) -- Don't hesitate to tell a 5 year old to call the Help Desk or ask their teacher to explain a concept differently – you'll be amazed what they can do with a little coaching!!!

If your child:

Doesn't understand a concept	Have them call, email or zoom their teacher or a friend from school for help (They will be learning to Communicate and Collaborate).
Is having trouble with their electronic device	Have them try to problem solve it, ask a friend or call the Help Desk at school (They will be experiencing Critical Thinking, Initiative, Technology Skills and Communication).
Doesn't like sitting in one room for a day	Have them ask the teacher if there is something they can do to move around a bit (They will be experiencing Flexibility and Initiative).
Has trouble understanding the video lessons	Before they give up-- have them stop the video every two minutes or so to write down what they learned in those two minutes. (They will be experiencing Information, Media, Technology and Flexibility).

Our teachers are working hard for your children and your children, are working hard on their schoolwork. We are all learning new ways to communicate with and instruct your children every day. We are experiencing and learning about Flexibility, Information, Media, Technology, Initiative, Communication, Collaboration, Critical Thinking and Creativity as we work through this very difficult time to ensure we are doing the best we possibly can for your children.

We know that our instructional techniques will get better and better as we try out new things and learn from our mistakes. Even when we master this process – it will still be important for your child to advocate for themselves using 21st Century Skills!

Here's a video that shows us that there is more than one way for a young child to learn to count and sort. Don't be afraid to be creative and help your child with the skills they need by doing small activities right at home or in the grocery store. It's not only fun for them, they will be developing lifelong skills!

<https://www.facebook.com/829313507/videos/pcb.10160702422848508/10160702422343508/>

If your children are older and already know how to count and sort – budgeting is always a great skill to have and often a difficult concept. Try giving them a grocery shopping list and a “pretend” amount of money to spend. They can go to the Walmart app and load up their cart – but must stay in budget. They'll learn how to **prioritize** and **think critically** about what can be purchased and what cannot.

If you would like more information about how to help your child through this **difficult time**, please do not hesitate to give me a call. I have lots of ideas I am willing to share.... we can **Collaborate** and **Problem Solve** together!