For Primary students, Distance Learning lasted almost a year. During that time, our homes served many purposes. For our students, home became a place for family and a place for school. For many, it was stressful to have those lines blurred.

This year, now that we have started the school year in person, I am hoping to support learning in the home, while not overloading the home workload. I am trying to make homework as meaningful as possible. Each student has a "Practical Life" portion of homework and an "Academic" portion of homework. A week's worth of homework is sent home with EI students every Wednesday.

**Practical Life Homework**
Practical life work is an important part of a Montessori education. "Practical life in Montessori is purposeful activity, develops motor control and coordination, and develops independence, concentration, and a sense of responsibility. The exercises in practical life cover two main areas of development: care of self, and care of the environment." (guidepostmontessori.com) My goal with Practical Life homework is to help students practice skills needed for our classroom and/or help with home responsibilities. If there is a way that your student can help out in your home, please let me know and I can incorporate it into your child's homework.

**Academic Homework**
All students are expected to read at least 20 minutes a day. This means they are reading to you (not you reading to them, although I encourage that too)! For early readers, I send home a Primary Phonics book that matches the phonics skill they are working on in their daily work. Early readers also have sight words sent home. These are a combination of dolch sight words, and sight words from the book your student is reading in book club.

If I send home more homework, it is because your child is showing that they need extra work in that area. Early readers also have sight words sent home. These are a combination of dolch sight words, and sight words from the book your student is reading in book club. If your student isn't quite grasping the skill we are working on in school, I may send home more homework. If your student isn't progressing with one of their daily works, such as comprehension, writing, or spelling, then I will send home additional practice.

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**READ 20 Minutes A Day!**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student A Reads</th>
<th>Student B Reads</th>
<th>Student C Reads</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>20 minutes x day</td>
<td>30 minutes x day</td>
<td>1 hour x day</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>600 minutes per school year</td>
<td>900 minutes per school year</td>
<td>1800 minutes per school year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>222.26 weeks per year</td>
<td>333.33 weeks per year</td>
<td>666.66 weeks per year</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A child's education is a team effort between the teacher, the guardian(s), and the child. I appreciate all the extra work you do at home!
This trimester, the Global Studies class has been studying the Inca civilization. Part of that lesson includes learning about the rope bridges built by the Inca people. These bridges date back at least five centuries and were instrumental in connecting the 10,000 miles of roads that linked the vast empire. As part of this unit we learned about the four modern Quechua communities that come together each year on either side of a gorge in Huinchiri, Peru to build a bridge out of ichu grass. Each household is responsible for bringing woven cords of grass which are joined together to create huge cables. These cables are stretched across the ravine and replace the bridge built the previous year. The bridge is strong enough to support 5,000 pounds.

The Global Studies class has set an ambitious goal to create a small replica of the traditional Inca rope bridge. The students want the bridge to be 12 feet long and be strong enough to support the weight of multiple people. This will be a year long project with one day each week set aside for twisting the rope and eventually constructing the bridge. We recently began twisting the cords of rope using jute twine. We hope to have enough rope to construct the bridge in spring.
January English Language Arts ~ Mr. Bill

Let me take advantage of my first newsletter article to introduce myself. My name is Bill Crozier, and I am the new English Language Arts Learning Leader at Riverway. I have been teaching high school for over 35 years, including 17 years at Cotter High School. Most recently, I taught adult education for the Winona Area Public Schools community education program before retiring to pursue a writer’s life. However, when the opportunity to join the Riverway Learning Community came my way, I realized I was not done with my education career.

So far I have found Riverway exceptionally engaging. I am especially amazed at the creativity of the students. I have often struggled to get students to think outside the box and think for themselves, this has not been the case at Riverway. When S3 students were assigned to write a mystery, students took the assignment in several different directions. Some wrote mysteries as assigned, one student started a movie script, two students wrote a shared mystery story from two different points of view, several students pursued research in crimes and mysteries, while another designed extensive plans for a mystery-based role playing game. This willingness to make an assignment their own demonstrates the creative streak that runs through the students here.

One of the more exciting paths we will be following this trimester is the study of indigenous knowledge. The Minnesota English Language Arts Standards requires the study of texts reflecting Dakota and Anishinaabe cultural perspectives. With an eye on these standards, S2 has embarked on a unit exploring Traditional Environmental Knowledge (TEK). TEK involves the study of practices, beliefs, and traditions handed down through generations for over a hundred years.

Students will be reading multiple texts starting with selections from Robin Wall Kimmerer’s *Braiding Sweetgrass* and *Traditional Ecological Knowledge: Learning from Indigenous Practices for Environmental Sustainability* as well as native American Minnesota authors David R. Treuer and Louise Erdrich. Kimmerer, a botanist and member of the Citizen Potawatomi Nation, focuses on what we can learn from plants and nature. As part of the Environmental Learning Plan, students will use the understandings gleaned from TEK to write a critique of Western consumerism and waste. Hopefully, we will also try out some recipes from Sean Sherman’s *The Sioux Chef’s Indigenous Kitchen*. Sherman is an Oglala Lakota chef who is redefining Native American cuisine. Students are also invited to explore their own traditional roots with the understanding that all cultures have wisdom to pass down through the ages.

Teaching Assistant Experience ~ Ms. Franklin

Last trimester Christian Kahn had the opportunity to work in Mary Kate Franklin’s classroom. He took on this new leadership role with great stride and plans to continue working in the SI classroom during 6th period in the second trimester.

Here is what he had to say about his experience.

“Last trimester I had the opportunity to help Ms. Franklin in her 6-period class as a teacher’s assistant. The reason I was able to be a teacher’s assistant was because I had enough credits and did not need to be in the credit recovery class, so I asked Ms. Franklin to see if she needed any help in her 6th period class and she said she needed help.

For about 10 weeks, I assisted Secondary 1 in a variety of ways, ranging from Bizarre Bazaar projects to leading football or kickball games. I also helped around the classroom with the extra assignments and tried to help all the S1 kids understand what they are doing. Now from doing all of this it all helped me understand what it’s like being a teacher’s assistant. There were some challenges at the start but I think I’ve started to make friendships and was starting to be respected by most of them.”
Recently a couple of the Secondary Science classes spent some quiet time at Tillman Park next to Gilmore Creek. We all enjoyed the beautiful, peaceful autumn day. While we were there, we collected weather data and then spent some mindful time using our senses to experience all that we could sitting next to the water. I wanted to share some of the pieces of writing and art they created.

Purple, yellow, orange, red
Autumn breeze flows as summer ends
Crunch, crunch, crack, crack
The leaves fall as Autumn comes back
Caramel, cinnamon, pumpkin spice
Candy and the feasts are always nice!
Windy, sunny, cool, calm
It’s fall as a leaf lands in my palm

As summer days become dimmer
The trees are becoming older
As they dance in the wind peacefully letting each leaf fall.
The colors are getting brighter as well as darker
The air is getting colder
The sun hides behind the grey clouds sleeping most the day away

I chose to sit under the bridge because it is just a peaceful spot. It is satisfying to hear the water flow. I really like hearing my own thoughts in a quiet place.

I hear nature, such as wind and birds chirping, trees rustling and cars going by on the highway. I smell the fresh outside air. I feel concrete that I am sitting on. Notice that the season is changing from summer to autumn. I experienced myself to be calm during those senses. It can really help you be calm while doing work like this.

By Kilena Deal

Leaf rubbing from Nature Journal Entry
Along with a brand-new trimester, we have new after school activities being offered at Riverway on Tuesdays. One of the new clubs for E1 and E2 students is called Game Club. In Game Club, we play board games, card games, and brain puzzles together. This is a fun opportunity for kids to practice following rules, problem-solving, and sportsmanship. Students practice verbal communication when they explain their reasoning as discrepancies arise. They develop conflict resolution skills and learn how good it feels to compromise peacefully.

Students create new memories as well as strengthen their friendships. I noticed lots of laughter on the first day! I asked them what their highlights were after our first day, and several of them agreed that their favorite part was getting to know kids that they don’t know very well and having fun, of course!

Creating opportunities for students to be themselves and get to know one another better is really important. We believe in nurturing the social and emotional well-being of our students, and Game Club is one of the newest ways to do just that!

The Board Blip

Thank you to our eligible voters that voted in November! Both proposed bylaw amendments were passed. Moving forward, Riverway's Board of Directors will need 1/4th of eligible voters to vote in order for a vote to count. In addition, moving forward, there will need to be at least 2 Riverway teachers on the Board, as opposed to 51% or more.

Are you interested in being on the Board? We would love to hear your voice! Elections will take place at the annual meeting on Wednesday, April 6th at 6pm. If you are interested, please submit your letter of interest to lboysen@riverwaylearningcommunity.org.

WE HOPE TO SEE EVERYONE
(in person or virtually)
AT THE ANNUAL BOARD MEETING
ON
WEDNESDAY, APRIL 6th at 6:00.
What is Phonemic Awareness?
Phonemic awareness is the ability to hear and manipulate sounds in words. Children must first understand that words are made up of separate speech sounds that can be blended together to make words BEFORE they can make sense of using the alphabet to read and write.

Researcher Say This…
Children who develop strong phonemic awareness skills at an early age are more likely to become fluent readers and better spellers than children who do not.

What should my Kindergartner be able to do?
By the end of kindergarten your child should be able to:
- Identify whether words rhyme (hat, mat or sun, bun)
- Provide a word that rhymes with another (“Tell me a word that rhymes with sun?” FUN)
- Blend syllables or onset rhymes into a word (cup-cake “cupcake” or /m/ /ap/ map)
- Clap or count syllables in a 1 to 3 syllable word
- Provide the first sound in a word (“What is the beginning sound in ‘fish’?” Child- /f/)
- Segment sounds in a 2-3 phoneme word (“Tell me the sounds in hat.” Child- /h/ /a/ /t/)

How can I help my child at home?
- Read books and poems that focus on the rhythm of language and rhyme. Books such as “Hop on Pop” or “Sheep in a Jeep” help children pay attention to the sounds in words.
- Play word games such as “Guess My Word”. “I’m thinking of a word that rhymes with _____. Can you guess my word?”
- Have a sound scavenger hunt. Give your child a bag and ask him/her to find as many things around the house that begin with a certain sound.
- Play “I Spy” with beginning sounds of words “I spy something that begins with /t/.

To help your child segment (separate) and blend sounds in words:
- Have your child guess a word that you sound out slowly (ssssuuuuuunnnnn).
- Give your child 3-5 blocks, beads, bingo chips, or similar items. Say a word and have your child move an object for each sound in the word.
- Jump for sounds. Say a word and have your child jump for each sound in the word while saying the sound.
New year, new goals! We long to better ourselves at least once a year and most often, individuals will make a change as the new year comes. A new year brings hope and excitement for a change in our lives. Change can happen by setting goals. One of the best strategies to achieve a goal is through a S.M.A.R.T. goal.

A S.M.A.R.T goal is designed to foster clear expected levels of performance (University of California). The acronym stands for specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time-bound. What specific goals do you want to target? Are they related to health? Productivity? Organization? How will you know you have reached your goal? How are you measuring it? Is your goal realistic to achieve and relatable within a reasonable timeframe?

I have always benefited from visuals and modeling when learning something new. Below, in the chart, is an example of S.M.A.R.T goals for the new year.

Example

S
I will get a minimum of seven hours of sleep 80% of the time from January to May. Better sleep will help me stay focused longer and increase many health benefits.

M
Five out of the seven days I will track how many hours I slept using a bullet journal. Tracking how many hours I sleep will also help me identify patterns in my sleeping habits.

A
I can accomplish this by the end of May.

R
Tracking may be the hardest part, or staying off my phone before going to bed, but I will need to remind myself of the benefits of good sleep and why I am working on this goal.

T
By the end of May I hope to have created a healthy habit of getting consistent and adequate sleep.

Creating goals creates new behaviors to promote a sense of self-mastery. Setting goals motivates us, improves our mental health, and increases our personal and professional success. Furthermore, it gives us direction, helps us identify what is important, and keeps us accountable. At Riverway, students create SMART goals in their Individualized Learning Plans (ILP). Other ways Secondary students have set SMART goals is in their 30-Day Challenge and an assignment for English were they plan road trip of their choice. Our students are used to setting goals but sometimes they need help sustaining stamina to achieve them. If you are one who needs guidance in achieving your goals for longer than three weeks consider starting small and assessing if your goal is achievable within a realistic time frame. Have you considered when you are working on your goal? Is it something that is on your radar, but haven’t penciled into your schedule or routine? Lasty, avoid procrastination, lack of commitment, excuses, and learn to handle failure.
January is a time for hunkering down, curling up in a blanket and eating something warm and comforting. Here in the Riverway Community, I really enjoy making things like chicken curry, red beans and rice, and my chili recipe, featured below. It’s very similar to my mom’s chili recipe she always made for me on cold days when I walked home from school. I hope it warms your family up as much as it did mine!

Riverway’s Beef & Bean Chili

Ingredients

- 2# ground beef, thawed
- 2 cans kidney beans
- 2 cans Bush’s chili beans
- 2 cans black beans
- 2 green bell peppers, diced
- 1 onion, diced
- 3 cloves garlic, minced
- 1 can crushed tomatoes
- 3 tbsp chili powder
- 1 tbsp cumin
- 2 tsp onion powder
- 1 tsp cayenne pepper (if you like it spicy)
- Salt and pepper to taste
- Canola oil

Directions

1. Heat a large, heavy-bottomed pot over medium heat. Brown the beef, about 5-7 min. Drain the fat and set the beef aside. Add the canola oil, then the onions, peppers and garlic. Cook until vegetables are wilted, about 5 min.
2. Add the spices, beans, tomatoes and beef to the pot, bring to a steady simmer, then turn down the heat. *NOTE* Stir frequently and keep over low heat! The chili will stick to the bottom of the pot if you forget about it!
3. Simmer the chili for at least 90 min, but the longer it cooks, the better it will taste!
4. Season with salt to taste and serve with cheese and cornbread. Keep leftovers in the fridge for a few days. If anything, it tastes better the next day!

Thank you to Riverway Learning Community’s Board of Directors

Chairs Lydia Boysen, Secretary Nikki Lux, Treasurer Mary Kate Franklin

Members Janine Stanton, Chris Perkins