



SO NEW

SOUTHMORELAND NEWSLETTER

APRIL 2020
ISSUE 06

EMILY ZELENKA

Alumni and Inspiration

COVID 19 UPDATE

Our Continuity of Education

1,000 POINT MILESTONE

Riley Comforti Excels in the
Classroom and on the Court

1ST GRADE BEEKEEPERS

Mrs. Potochnik is All
the Buzz!

CONTINUING EDUCATION COVID 19

Dear Parents, Guardians, Students and Community,

It is hoped that this letter finds you well and safe. These are unprecedented times in which we find ourselves, and the challenges we face in many aspects of our lives are unfamiliar and difficult. Among those many challenges is the issue of learning for our students. Much time, discussion and planning has gone into this question--how best to serve students and families--and no solution is perfect. Like many things we face in this period, we ask for your patience as we begin our distance learning strategy. We are learning, too.

Beginning March 30, 2020, students will begin distance learning opportunities. It should be made clear that distance learning is not simply online instruction. Distance learning means different paths for students to access instruction and new experiences. For our younger students in grades K-5, we believe that providing practice and experiential learning options is best. We will not concern ourselves with grading as we begin this process. We are more concerned with contact and sharing great resources for students to think and practice again. Similarly, at the secondary level, instructional opportunities will involve experiential learning but will be more focused on students learning new content that may be graded. Secondary teachers will be flexible as to how they will assign and grade material. It is a reality that the district has limited technology to share with those families that are in need. It is asked that families request only one (1) Chromebook per household so as to ensure we can provide as many Chromebooks to families that need them as possible.

A help desk will be established for those individuals having questions or concerns about Chromebooks and their usage. The email address for the help desk will be helpdesk@southmoreland.net and will be staffed by Mr. Smithula from 9:00 am - 3:30 pm Monday through Friday.

Our online component will be done through Google Classroom. All students have district emails that are first name and last name at southmoreland.net (for example, joesmith@southmoreland.net). The student password is their lunch ID number unless it was previously changed by the student. Please log in to Google using that email and number to access your student's Google Classrooms.

We recognize that for some, the lack of internet access is difficult. In those circumstances, we will be printing the same materials that we deliver online to our students. Please be understanding that as we learn how to best serve our students in these new ways, we will be moving slowly and simply. In that way we can evaluate our work and make improvements as we go.

Please note that accurate information regarding this distance learning strategy will come solely from the Southmoreland School District through School Messenger, the District website and from official district email blasts. This is done to ensure clarity of action and to provide updates that are important and necessary.

Teachers have been asked to limit the amount of time that students will need to be working on their distance learning assignments. The last objective we should have is to make things more frustrating or difficult for students and parents. We will focus on essential learnings and experiential opportunities in the core subjects. Itinerant teachers will also be sharing activities for students to do at home. Our counselors will be making contact with students and families to offer support or connect resources.

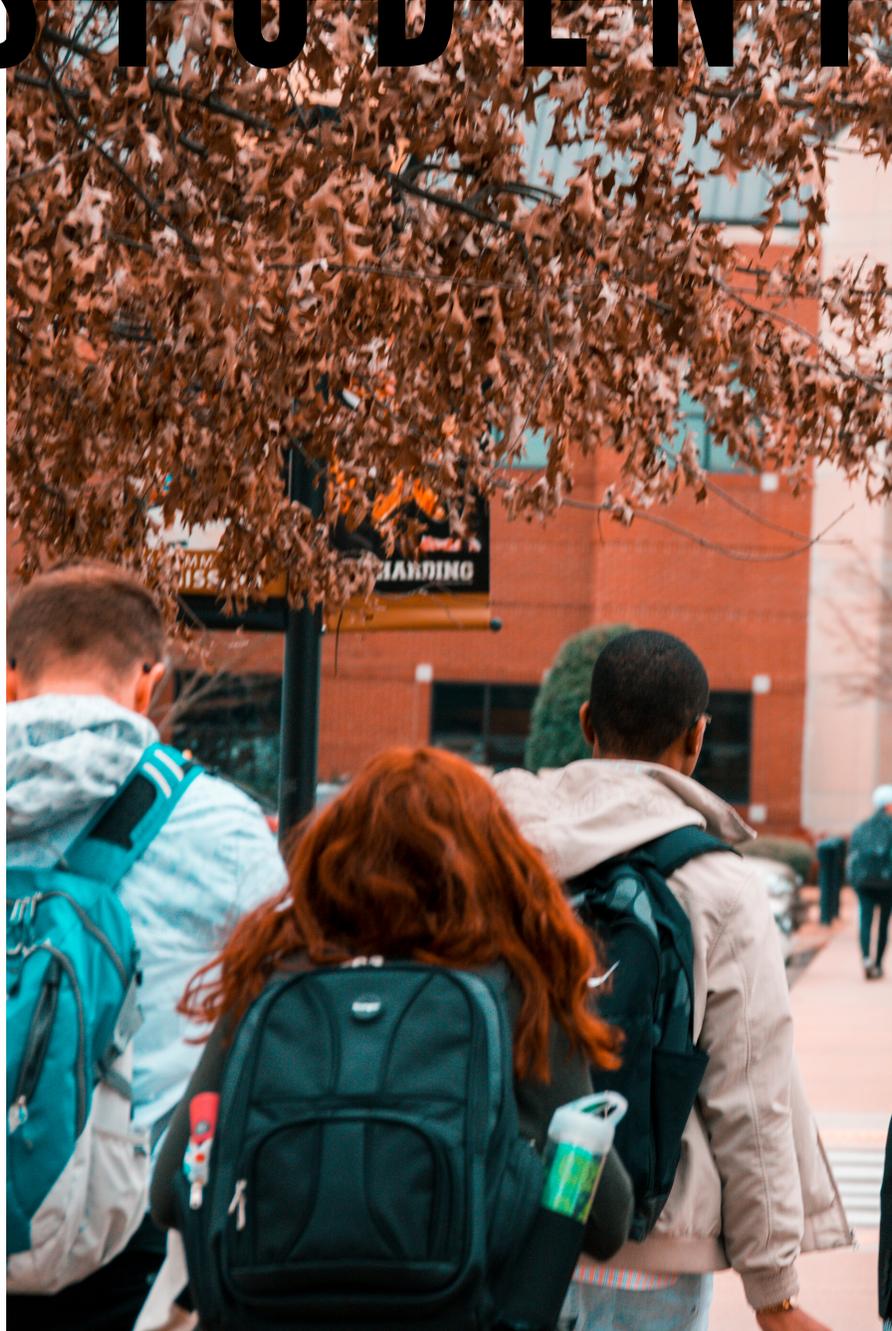
Together, we can, and we will, get through this and be stronger as a community as a result.

Sincerely yours,
Vincent Mascia, Superintendent

NEXT ISSUE

10th Graders are currently filming a documentary entitled "COVID Can't Stop Us From Learning," showcasing what learning from home looks like. This will also be the theme of the next District Newsletter. If you are a student, alumni, parent, community member, or staff member who would like to contribute to this special edition, please email Jenna Hixson at hixsonj@southmoreland.net.

STUDENTS



2020

book club

BRIANNA HOWELLS

With an excess of books and a willingness to make a change, what better action is there to take than to educate children? Brianna Howells, a 17 year old Southmoreland senior, possessed that willingness and took it upon herself to positively inspire the youth in her community.

Every month at the Scottdale Library, Brianna holds her book club for 4th and 5th grade students in the area. She states about her club that "reading in kids has gone down significantly, and I hoped this book club would encourage kids to keep reading." The way in which she made her dream a reality, however, has a lot of planning involved.

For every meeting held, Brianna dedicates her time and creates a work-related activity for the children who do attend. And before leaving, the kids get to choose one or two books to read for the next month. At the following meeting, Brianna asks the kids to talk about the books they read and lets the kids keep them for free.

Besides preparing for her next book club meeting, Brianna enjoys being involved in her school and enjoying the free time that she does have to herself. She is a supportive fan for all of Southmoreland's sports teams. At home, she likes to read, watch TV, play with her dog Ziva, and hang out with friends on the weekend.

For the future, she plans to attend Seton Hill University to earn a degree in Elementary Education. She states that her biggest goal is "to be proud of the life that I create for myself."

In her graduating year, Brianna has one tip of advice for her peers as she sets off in her future endeavors: "I think it is important for more of my peers to get involved. Getting involved in a club makes school a lot more enjoyable, and I just feel it's important for everyone to make the most of their years in highschool."

-Jacob Levendosky, Senior



RILEY COMFORTI

By Emily Eutsey, Junior

In high school basketball, scoring 1,000 points is not an easy task. It takes dedication to the sport, above average work ethic, and the immense support from everyone around you.

Riley Comforti, a Senior at Southmoreland High School, reached this milestone in his basketball career. It came down to the last home game of the season against McGuffey, who Comforti had struggled with in the past. In the end, he had reached his 1,000 points mark, and his high school basketball career would be one to remember.

A fellow teammate and the one who assisted him on his last point to 1,000 was, Zach Cernuto.

Cernuto states, "Riley is a very hardworking basketball player. He is always the first one in and the last one out, and he is always working on different things. He pushes each one of us at practice to get better and encourages all of us when we make a mistake."

Another supporter of Comforti, Coach Frank, says that, "Riley has worked extremely hard throughout his career. It's fantastic to see him rewarded with such a great accomplishment."



"EVERYONE GOES TO PRACTICE DURING THE WEEK, BUT IT'S THE EXTRA HOURS AND TIME BY YOURSELF THAT SETS YOU APART."

Going into the game he said, "I was a little nervous," but once the 1,000 points was reached he felt "a little bit of relief" and then "returned back to focus" to finish the game.

Comforti plays the game because of the competitive nature of the sport.

"There is nothing better than going head to head with someone both striving for the same goal and seeing who is ultimately better."

"Without the support from my coaches, parents, and teammates, I wouldn't have come close," he states.



Comforti Continued...

Comforti has been a leader during his time at Southmoreland, not only on the basketball court but also in the school atmosphere. He does not know what the future holds, but it definitely will be filled with hardwork and dedication.

“Listen to your coaches because they know what is best for you and the team. Also, if you want to be good you have to put in the work. Everyone goes to practice during the week, but it’s the extra hours and time by yourself that sets you apart.”



STAFF

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SCIENCE ACROSS THE GRADES

the buzz

KAELY POTOCHNIK

BY PAIGE LADOWITZ, JUNIOR

Recently, one of Southmoreland's first grade teachers brought her own fascination into classrooms of first grade students.

Kaely Potochnik graduated from Southmoreland in 2004 where she then continued her education at the University of Pittsburgh-Johnstown to receive her undergraduate degree in 2008, followed by attending California University for her graduate degree.

Also, in the midst of pursuing that for herself, Potochnik began working at the Primary Center as a first grade teacher in 2010.

About three years prior, Potochnik took a beekeeping course that was offered by the Westmoreland County Beekeepers Association. Subsequently, Potochnik has brought a new way of understanding the background of one of the stories taught, "Honey Bees," by introducing her newfound knowledge of beekeeping to her students.



Potochnik mentions that this story "is about life in a honey bee hive. In order to build background knowledge, [she] brings in an extra hive body with frames, a bee suit, and tools." From there, the students have the ability to examine what an actual hive looks like, real cells (some with pollen and honey still inside), and (dead) bees at close proximity.

By doing this, Potochnik provides a way to rejuvenate the story and excite the children. Some of her students were gracious enough to contribute their thoughts on the experience:

"I thought it was cool. It smelled good."

-Hadley

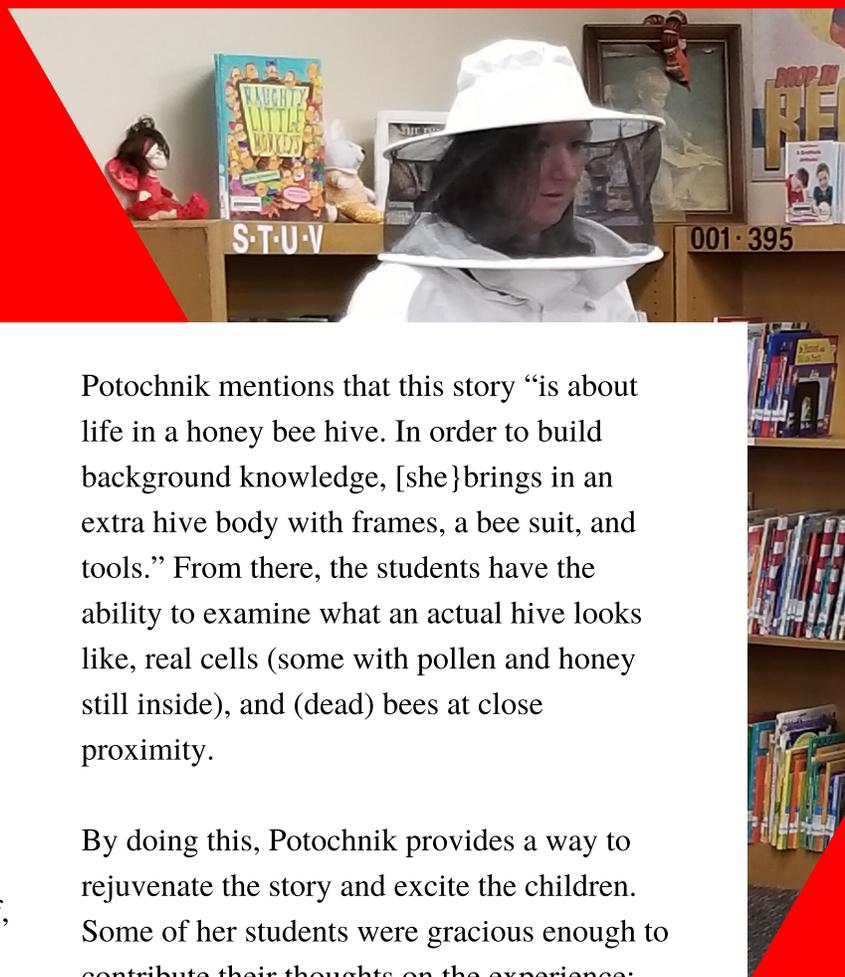
"It was cool. I liked seeing the bees' home and seeing the dead bees up close."

-Eden

"It was so cool. The hive had lots of honey and wax. Only the girls have stingers and the boys get kicked out in the winter because the girls do all the work."

-Madelyn

Not only has Potochnik presented her hobby to the students but to children attending the Children's Garden Club at the Scottdale Library and Read with Me at SPC. She hopes that she can sustain this experience for children in years to come.



ZACHARY CAVALIER

by Abby Fullem, Senior

With the continuous advancements in the technological world, education has seen many changes as well. Bringing chromebooks into the classroom was a big step just a couple of years ago, so are we ready for what could be next? Zachary Cavalier is.

Cavalier has been teaching at Southmoreland since 2002. He started teaching Biology in 2005 and Anatomy and Physiology about 10 years ago. He attended Bethany College and has a B.S. in Biology with a minor in education. Today, he teaches AP Biology and Human Anatomy and Physiology to the students at Southmoreland High School.

“I am using the 3D printer to create anatomical models,” Cavalier said, “Currently, I am building miniature -40% scale desktop skeletons. I want to have a class set, about 10 or so miniatures ready to go by the end of the school year. Also, I am creating a set of hominid skulls for display and use in the bio classes.”

Learning the best way to use the tool can “sometimes be a challenge,” according to Cavalier due to needing to “find time to create models to print or find models online that are good quality,” but being that students have already been able to make life-like models of certain human anatomy structures like an australopithecus afarensis skull, they appear to be learning quickly.



“SOME OF THE WORLD’S GREATEST ACCOMPLISHMENTS IN HISTORY HAVE BEEN THE RESULT OF PERSEVERANCE.” -ZACHARY CAVALIER

Having taught these classes for years, Cavalier saw an opportunity to bring some of today’s technology into his classes. Cavalier raised enough money to purchase a 3D Printer for his classroom.

Senior student Jacob Levendosky said that he was “extremely excited to hear that Mr. Cavalier was raising money to purchase a 3D printer for the class.”

“I have always wanted a 3D printer myself, and I have looked up an extensive amount of 3D printing videos to understand more about something I feel is an interesting and powerful too,” Levendosky said, “The possibilities to create are endless!”

And Levendosky is correct in saying that there are endless possibilities with this tool, and Cavalier plans to take full advantage of that to help his students truly understand what they are learning about.

“The 3D printer reveals a whole different way of learning as it brings to life what we see on the pages of our textbook,” senior student, Alexis Hull, said, “Instead of diagrams on paper that can be hard to understand, the 3D models contain a simplicity to them that you can evaluate in depth.”

All throughout this experience, Cavalier just wanted to show and remind his students to never give up.

“Some of the world’s greatest accomplishments in history have been the result of perseverance,” Cavalier said.



ALUMNI



TRAVEL TO THE UNKNOWN

by Lily Grech, Junior

EMILY ZELENKA



Everyone who attends a small school in a small town hopes to find great success in the real world, and Emily Zelenka, a graduate from Southmoreland High School, is a prime example of achieving these aspirations.

Emily graduated from Southmoreland in 2013 and graduated from the University of Pittsburgh in 2017 with a Bachelor's Degree in Chemical Engineering and a Minor in Chemistry.

Since graduating from the University of Pittsburgh, Emily has had many great accomplishments. Career wise, she started as a Rotational Engineer at Washington Penn Plastic Inc., which is the leading custom compounder of thermoplastics in North America. Only a year later, she was promoted to a Process Engineer at the company's largest manufacturing plant in Washington, PA.

As a process engineer, she was responsible for capital and continuous improvement projects to improve product quality and overall equipment effectiveness of ten production lines.

Emily expressed she is "proud to be part of such a successful company," and she truly enjoys her work and responsibilities.

Emily believes her greatest personal accomplishment - so far - was earning her degree and starting her professional career as an engineer. This was no easy feat, for she worked two to three jobs in college on top of the challenging curriculum. Not only that, she coached a club volleyball team and led them to be one of the top ten teams in the region, which was one of the best experiences she ever had.

These accomplishments lead back to her schooling at Southmoreland. Emily would like to thank all the teachers and athletic coaches she had when she attended high school, as they gave her the confidence she needed to be successful and accomplish her goals. Without their guidance, she believes she would have been lost during her college career and possibly her current life.

Emily claimed, "I'm very proud of my success and thank Southmoreland for being a part of it."

Emily also offered important advice to current high schoolers: She did not decide to study engineering until her senior year when she shadowed an engineer and recognized her true interests in science, math, and problem solving. Most importantly, Emily encourages students to "work hard and keep pushing yourself to achieve whatever goals you pursue."



Emily Halsted

BY HANNAH SCHAEFFER, JUNIOR

Emily Halsted, a 2018 Southmoreland graduate, is currently enrolled at the University of Pittsburgh at Greensburg, class of 2022, as a member of the second class of the new nursing program.

Even amongst her busy everyday life and hectic class schedule, Halsted founded a chapter of the National Student Nurses Association, where she serves as President.

“I wanted to start this club from the second day of classes,” Halsted said. “I even decided to approach the director of the program to discuss the details of it. There are several projects we are working on right now to benefit both the community and the university itself. I can’t wait to see what the future holds!”

In addition to being President of the National Student Nurses Association, she went on an Alternative Spring Break Trip with the Habitat for Humanity at UPG, which she regards as her biggest personal accomplishment.

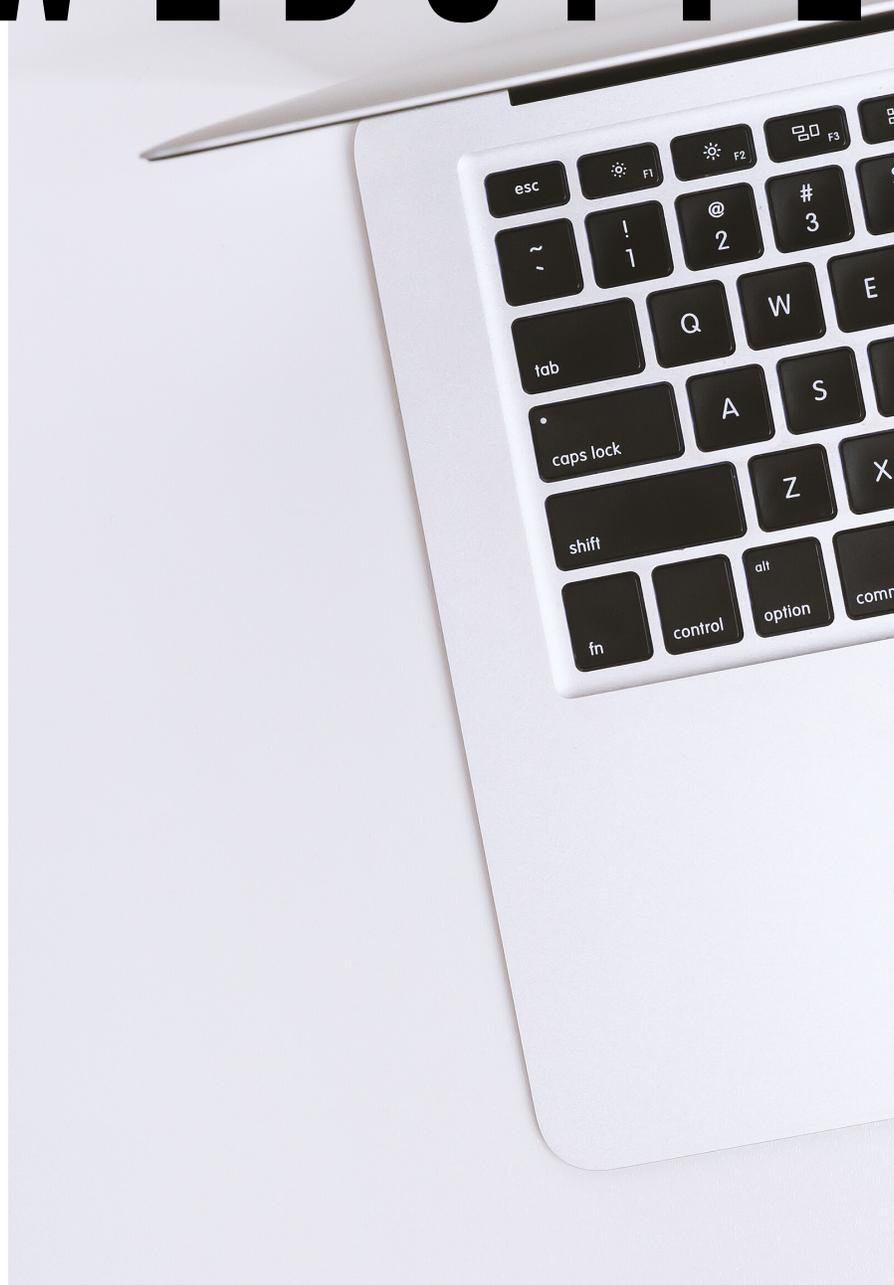
This trip allowed her to expand her leadership skills, which led to her starting a chapter of the National Student Nurses Association, becoming a Peer Leader, a Community Assistant, and an officer for many different clubs.

“This trip changed my perspective on life in more ways than one,” Halsted said. “I have learned to step into those small moments that can take great courage whether it is hanging an air filtration system in a basement that is three to four feet high or simply introducing myself to someone I have never spoken to before.”

Emily’s advice to current students of Southmoreland is to not be afraid of creating new things because great things will happen as a result if they are willing to take a leap of faith.

“From my own personal experience, I do things that scare me all the time, but they have led me to life-long friends, networks, passions, and self-love,” she said. “Don’t allow dissuasion to consume you!”

WEBSITES



**CHECK OUT THESE
GREAT ONLINE SOURCES**

THE BEST ONLINE SOURCES

by Jenna Hixson

1

FACEBOOK GROUPS

Teachers, parents, and the community are joining together to share instructional opportunities and positivity! Search "SES PBIS."

2

GOOGLE CLASSROOM

Southmoreland School District is using Google Classroom as the dashboard for online learning K-12. Contact teachers for join codes!

3

SCREENCASTIFY

Teachers, check out this wonderful resource that will allow you to provide video commentary while showing your students anything from a Google Document to a saved PDF to a website.

4

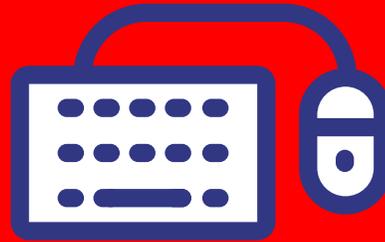
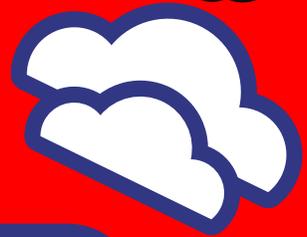
KHAN ACADEMY

A great source for educational videos. This is a great place for teachers to find videos for instruction or students and parents to find videos to supplement instruction.

5

COMMONLIT

Free collection of reading passages in all literary and nonfiction genres for grades 3-12.



6

PINTEREST

A wonderful source for both teachers and parents to find ideas for lesson plans, crafts, and indoor activities such as scavenger hunts.

7

HEALTHLINE

During these unprecedented times, being physically active is essential for both children and adults. This is a great source for research. There are also at home fitness videos for people of all ages available on YouTube.

8

GOOGLE SUITE

Google Docs, Google Forms, Google Slides, and all apps in the Google Suite can be downloaded to a smart phone. Many online assignments could be completed through a phone.

Coming Soon...

Successes in Online Learning

ADMINISTRATORS • STAFF • PARENTS
COMMUNITY • STUDENTS • ALUMNI

Scottie Hellos

STAFF • STUDENTS • ALUMNI

Senior Highlights

SCHOLARSHIPS • FUTURE PLANS • SHOUT OUTS

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contributing, contact

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