

(4/10/24 District Administrator's Corner Article)

It is early April, and after some incredibly beautiful weather, we woke recently to yet another snow storm and another inclement weather day for the River Valley School District. District staff have started facilitating virtual instruction on inclement weather days this year. Using virtual instruction is another way for students to be engaged and continue on the learning path, even when they are stuck at home. Here are some details of how it works.

For River Valley Early Learning Center and River Valley Elementary:

Teachers plan and prepare work for students, which is posted in a virtual classroom by 9:30 AM. Students have been shown how to use virtual classroom platforms (such as Seesaw or Google Classroom). On this platform, teachers provide instructions, which usually support work that was sent with students prior to the cancellation.

Students complete the assigned work at home and reach out if they need anything. Staff are available throughout the day to assist families and students via email, Seesaw or Google Classroom. The work is turned in on the next scheduled school day.

Many teachers are finding that students are excited to share how their parents or grandparents helped them get the work organized and done using the virtual classroom platform.

For River Valley Middle School and River Valley High School:

Teachers plan and prepare work for students, which is posted in a virtual classroom (Google Classroom) by 9:30 AM. At these grade levels, there are multiple virtual classrooms that students must use—one for each class or subject in a student's daily schedule. Students are required to be online and meet virtually at 10:00 AM with their "Blackhawk" group, which consists of a "homeroom" teacher and other students in that homeroom. During this Blackhawk session, daily announcements, expectations, and norms for virtual learning are reviewed. Attendance is taken and students who have not logged in/shown up are marked absent.

After this Blackhawk session, students engage in asynchronous learning—this means students work on their own to check multiple virtual classrooms for the work assigned for each class or subject in a student's daily schedule. Staff are available throughout the day to assist students via email or chat features. Students are given 24 hours to complete the assigned work and turn it in.

Many staff have commented how great it is to make a connection with students while they are at home. In online meetings with middle school students, it is not uncommon for a student, in the middle of a virtual session, to interrupt and say, "Hey everybody, meet Felix!" followed by smiles, and the show-n-tell display on a student's screen of an uncomfortable cat. They are excited to see each other in a new environment. They are willing to help each other and keep the progress of learning going in the right direction using virtual learning...even if it snows in April.

Sincerely,

Loren Glasbrenner, District Administrator
River Valley School District