



Supporting Children and Families through COVID-19

Dear Parents: As your school psychologists thought carefully about what to include in our final 2019-2020 newsletter, three topics rose to the top.

First, we realize that many parents, students and staff are trying to cope with the uncertainties surrounding the opening of the new school year. What will it look like? What may stay the same and what may be very different? How do we prepare our children for next year while we cope with what they have already been experiencing?

Secondly, we realize that parents are trying to find activities that will be available during this summer to create a more “normal” summer experience. We have included a varied list of possibilities! Many are free!

Lastly, but equally important, many parents are struggling with helping their children understand and respond to the racial strife that continues to bring both hope and frustration. How do we talk with our children in ways that open dialog and offer hope without causing more fear and stress?

We hope these resources will assist families with these huge topics. The school psychologists of the Bridgeport Public Schools wish all of our families a renewing summer, full of promise for a stronger, better future!

Coping with Continuing Uncertainty

If you have not already seen it, please check out Superintendent Testani’s letter on the Bridgeport Board of Education Website.

Here are some links to videos about the effects of stress on the body and relationships as well as some links for help:

- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=q7XE9pYnC5E>
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=m9Pg4K1ZKws>

If you are not sure if you or your loved ones are truly experiencing high levels of stress, here are some things to look for:

Physical signs, such as:

- Headaches
- Stomachaches
- Difficulty sleeping

Behavioral signs, such as:

- Regression (returning to a behavior that a child has already outgrown, such as wanting a pacifier)
- Increased clinginess
- Difficulty getting along with siblings or parents
- Withdrawal or an unwillingness to participate in activities the child used to enjoy

Mental signs, such as:

- Excessive worry or difficulty focusing or concentrating
- Ruminative thinking (continuously thinking the same negative thoughts)

Emotional signs, such as:

- Moodiness or mood swings
- Increased crying or angry outbursts
- Temper tantrums
- New or recurring fears

If you notice any of these signs, here is a resource to help foster resiliency:

Links for coping ideas:

- <https://copingskillsforkids.com/deep-breathing-exercises-for-kids>
- <https://www.edutopia.org/article/7-ways-calm-young-brain-trauma-lori-desautels>
- <https://www.edutopia.org/article/7-ways-calm-young-brain-trauma-lori-desautels>

Finally:

Here are some positive coping practices for getting your children, and yourself, through the unknown:

- Don't confuse needs with wants.
- Don't dwell on should have, could have, if only, and negativity. Stay positive.
- Practice Forgiveness.
- Contribute what you have to others, your knowledge and experience.
- Make things significant and purposeful, even if it's a smile, a wave or a positive statement.
- Change attitude by changing your behavior.
- Ask yourself Is what I'm doing, thinking or feeling a benefit to anyone.

Please see below for additional resources and Bridgeport area camps and programs:

Many of these are free or low-cost! While reasonable attempts were made to ensure programs were going to be available, this list may include camps that are not taking place this summer. Please check camps in advance to ensure they will be open.

In Bridgeport:

- <https://www.bridgeportsummercamps.com>
- <https://www.bridgeportct.gov/content/341307/341415/342200.aspx>
- PT Partners from the Project Learn Program sponsored by the Council of Churches of Greater Bridgeport.

Summer Program: The Summer STEAM Day Camp is a six-week enrichment program designed to keep previous participants in the after-school program involved, as well as to engage potential students for the upcoming school year. The six-week program is carefully structured to offer fun recreational games, sports and cultural enrichment, with academic activities carefully interwoven throughout the day. Project Learn staff members employ grade-specific techniques designed to improve reading, writing, math skills and citizenship. Our goal is to help our young students develop good study habits and cultivate a desire in them to put their very best effort forward and succeed academically. Participants enrolled in the summer program attend Monday-Friday with 95% of enrolled participants attending on a daily basis. Call (203) 334-1121 for specific information.

Bridgeport Caribe Youth Leaders: sports and community programs: <https://www.bcyl.org> (203) 913-0073

McGivney Community Center Day Camp and other programs: <http://mcgivneycenter.wixsite.com/>
(203) 333-2789