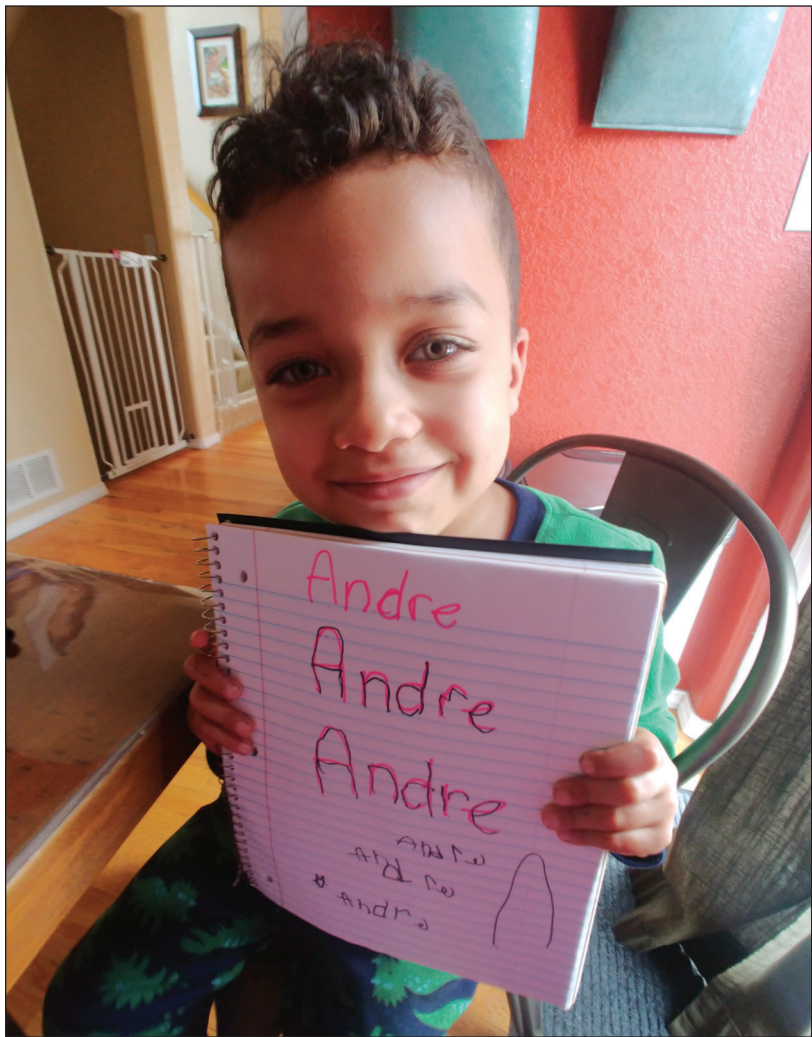




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A Hopeful Slog Out Of Unknown Country



Woodmen Hills Elementary School preschool student Andre Kearney read, and worked on writing his name and numbers during the first week of E-learning in E49 (District 49/Photo courtesy: Carolyn Rahn)- More E-learning photos inside on pg 5.

By Peter Hilts

D49 Chief Education Officer

Anyone who goes to school knows that the long slog of winter is a tough pull for students and teachers. From New Year's to Spring Break with hardly a pause, we root for snow days to give us a break. And then—2020. When D49's doors clicked shut on March 13, we had no idea about the path ahead. We were like explorers, forging into an unfamiliar wilderness with no map and no guide.

A month later, (but it feels like a year in Corona time) we all, we pioneers, are navigating COVID-19 with uncertain information and unpredictable emotions. But even if the landscape is unfamiliar and we sometimes seem lost, we are not alone. The paradox of this uncommon season is how it has linked us with common connections. We joke about toilet paper and worry about elders. We "flatten the curve," play with video backgrounds, and learn all the language of epidemics and emergencies. We didn't want this season, but we own it together all the same.

Like the fires in Waldo Canyon and Black Forest, the spring of COVID-19 will become our shared memory of a community disaster. Loved ones are lost and grieved. Cherished events are cancelled. Restaurants we crave may never reopen, and diligent practices, rehearsals, or preparations that felt like promising pathways, are suddenly closed off. After reviewing guidance and projections from health and government agencies, we decided to extend E49, our E-learning system, for the remainder of our normal calendar, ending on May 22. After considering guidance from the governor that in-person learning was "highly unlikely," as well as uncertainty about health agency guidance in



El Paso County, rather than prolonging that uncertainty, we decided to continue remote learning. We will also listen to our families to determine the best way to celebrate the graduating class of 2020.

Why is there not more despair? Why do students and teachers find smiles and silliness across the distance? Why are crafters sewing masks and neighbors making grocery runs to help nearby elders? Why is hope growing even when the hits keep coming? Maybe hope is the most lasting symptom of COVID-19. All of us understand we will never go back. It will be a long time before handshaking strangers and crowded arenas will feel easy again. But maybe what's really catching is our confidence that we can ride this one out and get better in the bargain. When the path ahead clears and the new world looks familiar, we'll be cleaner, more careful, more prepared and more likely to pay attention sooner if another microbe gets loose. I am proud that Coronavirus has not infected the character of D49. I still hear and observe people persisting with care and respect. I still see workers taking responsibility and parents giving us their trust. I am astonished at the teamwork and purpose so many have displayed.

The core values we promote—that make up our cultural compass—have never steered us wrong. We cannot care too much, show too much respect, or learn too much about how to be better. We are walking on unfamiliar trails, but we are not lost. Our compass points true north, and as we keep learning and caring and trusting and teaming, our values will bring us back home. I'm grateful to make D49 my home. I trust that you are too, and I'm hopeful that when we open our doors again, you'll all be there to share the welcome return.

Teachers Transition to E-Learning

By Joel Quevillon

Digital Communications Manager

In less than a week, dry erase markers turned into digital pens, scratch and sniff stickers morphed into emojis and the classroom shrunk to the size of a laptop computer.

The transition from the classroom to the online E-learning was fast, but not as traumatic as one might expect. Most schools had meetings to discuss the possibilities before spring break. Teaching teams got together to talk about the logistics and the "what ifs" in order to make the switch as smoothly as they could for the students and parents.

"Our administrative staff was watching the developments," said Kathy Cutler, algebra teacher at Falcon High School. "We knew there was a way we could teach online."

"Most of our teachers were set up to teach online before spring break," said Marissa Romero, seventh-grade science teacher at Horizon Middle School. "Once we had everything in place, like Google Classroom, we got the kids connected."

"We were already wrapping our minds around the possibility, so it wasn't a big shock," said Jamie Mitchell, first-grade teacher at Woodmen Hills Elementary School.

Expectations were mixed as many D49 teachers heard that online classes were not working well from friends who teach in other districts in the state and country.

"I heard about the struggles other districts were having, but we rocked it out," Romero said. "I was impressed with the amount of kids that are interacting and going forward with class. They've transitioned

well. The district has done such a great job. We've made it happen so the kids have access to what they need."

"I came into this expecting low involvement from the students," said Kylee Gross, fourth-grade teacher at Odyssey Elementary School. "I've been overwhelmed with the kids completing all their work. The efforts of the kids and the family involvement has totally impressed me."

Cutler added, "I applaud the parents and the kids. I've been so pleased with the number of kids that are showing up."

"It's a crazy time, with so many other things to worry about, including parents that have been laid off or are working from home, but there is still an effort toward learning," said Mitchell. "The interaction has been a surprise. We appreciate that."

One reason some students have been easy to engage is the use of programs they were comfortable using before moving to E-learning.

Gross said, "We're using the same tools, same technology, like Schoology. The students and parents are very familiar and comfortable using them. They had some confidence already, so there wasn't a big learning curve."

"At Woodmen Hills, we were trying to be consistent across the grade levels, using the same formats and resources which is good for the parents that have kids in different grades," Mitchell said.

"I tried to keep our normal routine in place to help with the transition," Romero said.

Though some students didn't have as easy of a start, they caught on quickly.

See E-Learning page 2



Kathy Cutler, algebra teacher at FHS, provides visuals to help students during E-learning. (District 49/Photo courtesy: Kathy Cutler)



Marissa Romero, seventh-grade teacher at HMS, supports students during E-learning. (District 49/Photo courtesy: Marissa Romero)

E-Learning From page 1

Issues included getting D49 Chromebooks, getting online and logging into the systems.

“We had some little things, easy to overcome type things,” said Cutler of her high school students.

Romero had a different take with her middle school students. “They like to be independent. They don’t want to ask for help. As much as kids are tech and app savvy, they’re not too familiar with hard to troubleshoot issues. They’d send emails with a vague problem, but they wouldn’t try to fix it. We’d work through it and it was usually a simple browser issue.”

With two weeks of E-learning completed, the teachers already have had their own personal experiences and some thoughtful insights on the transition.

Gross said it’s hard not to be the one to talk to the students. Odyssey staff was just trained for Zoom meetings with their students, so Gross hasn’t seen her fourth-grade students in a month. She’ll get that opportunity next week. “I’m excited to see them. The live interaction will help them. It will be easier for me to explain the lessons.”

In the meantime, her class has still been doing their regular morning circle, a sit down and talk time. She transitioned that into a live chat in Schoology with discussion questions. “It’s been fun seeing them answer and interact with each other. One student told another, ‘I miss school because I miss recess.’”

Mitchell had her first live Zoom interaction with her first graders this morning, which included children showing off their pets and a chicken. “I was excited to see everyone,” she said.

However, her transition to teaching from home needed some balance. “It’s hard to walk away from the computer. I’m in teacher mode, I want to be available to my students. I had to set a routine,” she said. “I hear from the parents that the kids like reading the comments I send back. It’s positivity in an uncertain time. It’s reassurance.”

Through this transition, her teaching team has bonded more. “We’ve learned, we’ve grown, as a team. We cry. We laugh. We bounce ideas off each other,” she said.

Cutler had participated in online learning at a previous teaching job. “I’m used to being on camera and teaching,” she said. But she has appreciated the FHS students’ interactions. “I’m getting a lot of ‘thank yous.’” She returns with sentiments with emojis, including a rose when the students do things well.

For Romero one of the biggest differences between a middle school classroom and online teaching, believe it or not, has been the relationship building with the students. Teachers are required to keep office hours, which most are doing with live Zoom meetings.

“Kids don’t want to come talk to you at lunch or after school,” she said. “We don’t get the one-on-one time in class. This way, the routines are out of the window. The students can log on and chat with teachers. I’ve been able to get to know some students at such a different level. It allows me the chance to adapt to their different learning styles.”

“How can you continue with this moving forward, to provide this experience for the kids?” Romero asked, knowing that things will be different when they return to the classroom.

One topic of concern among district leadership and teachers has been the vulnerability of at-risk students. D49 nutrition services saw the potential problem and is providing sack lunches for students at three locations. Teachers on the other hand are trained to see other areas of trouble, but it’s not as easy to see issues when the students aren’t at school.

“We had a long discussion with our team and administration about this,” Mitchell said. “How do we know? It was a

big concern for us. It’s hard not seeing your students, seeing their growth, their emotions, just to see how they are doing.”

“It’s a worry for all of us,” said Gross. “One of the gauges we’re using now is if we don’t see school work being turned in. Odyssey’s dean of students and family liaisons are reaching out to families.”

Mitchell said the Woodmen Hills counselors have been great and are checking in with families. “We have to trust that the kids are going to be alright,” she said.

Overall, the teachers agree the E-learning experience has been a smooth transition and the feedback from both parents and students has been positive.

“We’re all in this together. It’s a team effort with teachers, students and parents.” Mitchell said, “The students can see we’re learning along with them.”



Jamie Mitchell, first-grade teacher at WHES, prepares lessons for her students to learn remotely. (District 49/Photo courtesy: Jamie Mitchell)

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E49 Meal Program Works out Formula to Feed Hundreds Daily

By David Nancarrow
Director of Communications

To get a sense of what it takes to feed one student two meals a day during the suspension of in-person learning, place items into a bag as follows:

- Two milks (one juice carton when available).
- One cereal bowl.
- Mayo, mustard, ketchup pouches (depending on the meal that day).
- Two types of fruit: one packaged, the other fresh or in cup (depending on availability).
- Vegetable: either in cup or fresh (salad or carrots or celery {depending on availability}) Add dressing if needed (and available) for vegetables.
- Bag of chips (if available) Goldfish or graham crackers if available, and chips are not.
- Frozen juice or slushy: once or twice a week.
- One prepared, assembled, and individually wrapped entree from supporting kitchen team. Place in bag just before delivery to keep entree hot as possible.

Now repeat, nearly 1,100 times in one morning, five times a week.

Using this formula, and following the Federal Emergency Feeding program, the D49 nutrition services staff got busy preparing meals the first week of D49’s spring break,

as school districts followed distancing orders to reduce possible exposure to COVID-19.

Bagged Meals (Daily)	
EIES	250
OES	300
FESoT	500
Total (Avg)	1,050

“When we called [our staff], they answered,” said Monica Deines-Henderson, director of nutrition services. “It reminded me of other calls that have gone out when our nation was in need and how people step up to help others. These folks put aside their own family plans to be there for our community.”

Starting with a single D49 operated location at Evans International Elementary School, nutrition services saw demand triple almost overnight. Staff provided 30 meal bags the first day of distribution and 100 by Friday of the same week. The team quickly expanded their operation to Odyssey Elementary School and Falcon Elementary School of Technology by the following Tuesday.

“It was an eyeopener,” remarked Deines-Henderson. “Not only how many families are impacted by the closing of service industries, but also how many other industries this has touched, like retail stores and the strain that

puts on a region that is interdependent on each other for our economy.”

Serving a bagged meal is not the same as providing a meal in the cafeteria. Customer choice vanishes, but the nutritional and preparation requirements are the same. Normally the nutrition services team could offer about 900 hot breakfasts a day with an optional cereal choice district-wide. Now, cereal is the sole option in the 1,000 daily breakfasts served.

“We are still tied to the national school meal pattern and then tied to what we have on hand currently, while working with our distributor to fill our needs,” Deines-Henderson explained. “All fresh fruit must be washed, air dried, then individually wrapped and placed into a meal bag.”

Distributors are also feeling the pressure to deliver inventory as nearly every district in the state is providing bagged meals, which puts a crunch on common supply lines.

D49 nutrition services is working with a modest budget to cover food, labor and packaging costs during this season of in-person restrictions. School meal programs are under the oversight of the U.S. Department of Agriculture and are required to operate normally as a non-profit business to drastically reduce their reliance on district dollars. They may not be saving money, but nutrition services qualifies for cost reimbursement by



Jeanne Hornberger and Ramon Palomino sort out prepared lunches for distribution outside of Evans Elementary School. This location distributes 250 to 260 meals each day. (District 49/Aaron Villescas)

meeting USDA requirements of providing breakfast and lunch in every bag.

Deines-Henderson explained her staff thinks there’s much more to it than making sure meals get into bags. “They are there for our students every day during the school year,” she said, “making sure those students know that they are cared about.”

In these days of social distancing, every day a team of smiling staff members prepares, packs and walks the bagged meals to appreciative families waiting in cars. Serving meals reconnects them to students, who are reconnecting with the classroom from home.

“Our students know that they are still cared about and the ‘lunch staff’ will be there to help out,” said Deines-Henderson.

Chromebook Distribution Helps Launch E-Learning

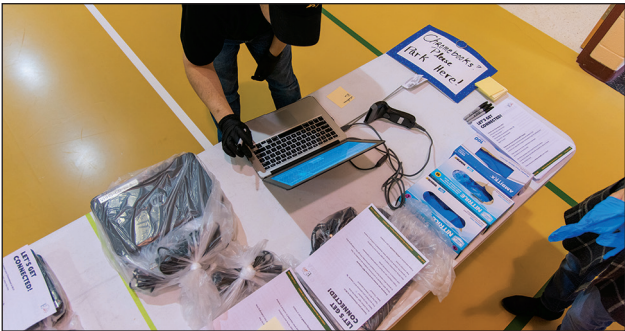
By Amy Matisek
Internal Communications Manager

Learning today is different than only weeks ago in District 49. Students aren’t seated at desks in a classroom or interacting in person with staff and fellow classmates in the gym or music room. COVID-19 has affected everyday routines like going to school, but part of the district’s transition to E-learning, ensured the school year and learning are moving ahead.

Distance learning mobilized quickly in D49 with the availability of district owned Chromebooks to share with learners in need. Families across the district who lacked electronic devices at home reserved a device to borrow in a matter of days. To begin the process, D49 staff members first determined which schools had the largest concentration of available devices, and which buildings had carts to transport and store them. Next, team members developed the best plan to clean and prepare devices for students, and how and where to disperse them.

The first Chromebook distribution event launched March 30, and staff presented hundreds of electronic devices to D49 students. Parents shared how crucial the tech is in helping some continue their learning. “I got a chance to sit in on one of my son’s classes with Mr. Barton [a math teacher at Sand Creek], and he did an awesome job explaining and getting my son prepared, which made him feel good because we didn’t know how this was going to turn out,” said Tamara Greer, D49 parent.

After hosting six total events for device distribution at



D49 Chromebooks are scanned, cleaned and bagged at Odyssey Elementary School for families who reserved a district device to support E-learning during E49 (District 49/Aaron Villescas)

schools including Sand Creek High School, Vista Ridge High School and Falcon Middle School, more than 3,000 loaner Chromebooks were in the hands of E49 students. The district supply includes approximately 1,000 more devices in the wings ready for students when needed.

“The teamwork involved to make E49 a reality was amazing,” shared Amber Whetstine, executive director of learning services. “From our security team greeting families at each distribution event, to the support of our facilities team cleaning and transporting devices, E49 would not be possible without a true team commitment to our students.”

The demand for loaner devices has been greatest for elementary level students, but the district has checked out Chromebooks to students in all grade levels. E49 staff mem-

bers, such as school secretaries and paraeducators, who did not have district-issued portable devices at home also received loaner Chromebooks.

D49 also helped families stay connected when possible, sharing wifi hotspots with families as early as April 10. The national demand for hotspots meant the district could meet a limited number of initial requests, but will share more as D49 receives them. The district plans to re-allocate Federal Title Program Grant Funds to help support paying for additional hotspots.

“We finally signed up for and picked up a Chromebook at Horizon Middle School. We had been trying to work from Android tablets, but it just wasn’t working. So, I signed up for one, not wanting to be greedy and take one from a family with nothing,” shared Beth Long, D49 parent and staff member. “When I showed up, the lady asked if we had two students, and after I said, ‘yes,’ they gave me two Chromebooks. I powered them up, and everything worked right away. It made such a difference to have the right tools. As we continue on this E-learning journey, this was a game changer.”

Although COVID-19 creates some uncertainty, working through the uncertainty together galvanized the staff’s commitment to finishing strong the last quarter of the school year. “While we know nothing can replace the face-to-face relationships our students and teaching staff thrive on, D49 teachers are leading the way with their commitment to ensuring every student continues to learn during E49,” Whetstine commented.

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Virtual Celebration Recognizes E49 Heroes

By Amy Matisek
Internal Communications Manager

Although the event couldn't take place in person, District 49 celebrated 39 staff heroes who contributed to the district's successful transition to E-learning, E-working and E-leading. The virtual Fantastic 49 presentation took place April 9 before the remote board of education meeting.

The ceremony recognized nutrition services staff members for organizing a "grab and go" meal program to feed students in need. Five days a week, students can pick up lunch and breakfast for the following day. With in-school learning suspended, the service has made a real difference to many families. "Our employees all came on board during spring break, so not one of them put their own needs, or their own family needs before our D49 kids," shared Monica Deines-Henderson, director of nutrition services. "I know our families appreciate you greatly."

E-learning would not be possible without ensuring all students have access to an electronic device for schoolwork. The presentation also honored team members from across the district for distributing more than 3,000 Chromebooks to learners in need. Employees cleaned and disinfected, packaged and then checked out the devices. "They made it their mission to put a smile on the faces of families by providing a cheerful attitude, and sense of calm and support," commented Amber Whetstone, executive director of learning services.

District leaders and the board of education praised the E49 Heroes for their selfless contributions during a true time of need. "I know that everyone is stepping up ... I'm very proud of District 49," remarked John Graham, board of education president.

Congratulations to the following team members who were honored as E49 Heroes:

Nutrition Services Staff who organized grab & go meals:

- Sophie Bettendorf - Falcon Elementary School of Technology
- Barb Coffey - Falcon Elementary School of Technology
- Heather Corrothers - Odyssey Elementary
- Holly Fox - Evans International Elementary
- Jeanne Hornberger - Facilitator
- Roxanne Horton - Facilitator
- Mariana Lewis - Rover
- Diego Martin - Distribution
- Shigeko Padovich - Odyssey Elementary
- Ramon Palomino - Evans International Elementary
- Jack Reidy - Evans International Elementary
- DeeDee Scovel - Falcon Elementary School of Technology
- Stacy Shaffer - Facilitator
- Ekaterina Shavers - Evans International Elementary
- CaDonna Trujillo - Odyssey Elementary

Staff Across District who distributed Chromebooks:

- Nancy Aziz, Remington Elementary
- Loren Bradley, BASE49
- Brent Buena, learning services
- Chris Campbell, bus driver
- Don Curtis, bus driver
- Daniel DeJesus, learning services
- Marisol Delgado-Carbajal, BASE49
- Misty DeMaria, bus paraprofessional
- Ingrid Haby, BASE49
- Deb Hoover, bus driver
- Greg Hoover, bus driver
- Jamie Losinski, bus driver
- Angelica Marquez, Evans International Elementary
- Jeff Nicoll, bus driver
- Rocio Padilla, Remington Elementary
- Marion Parra, Remington Elementary
- Melissa Riggs, learning services
- Sadie Russell, Remington Elementary
- Steve Rutledge, bus driver
- Hunter Schaal, BASE49
- Patty Schlegel, BASE49
- Wendi Sidney, learning services
- Eric Stelter, bus driver
- Trinity Wedde, Odyssey Elementary

Season of E-Learning Photos



Nutrition services staff prepare thousands of grab & go meals for families to pick up at three different locations in District 49 beginning the week of March 23. Meals are available five days a week. (District 49/Amy Bremser)



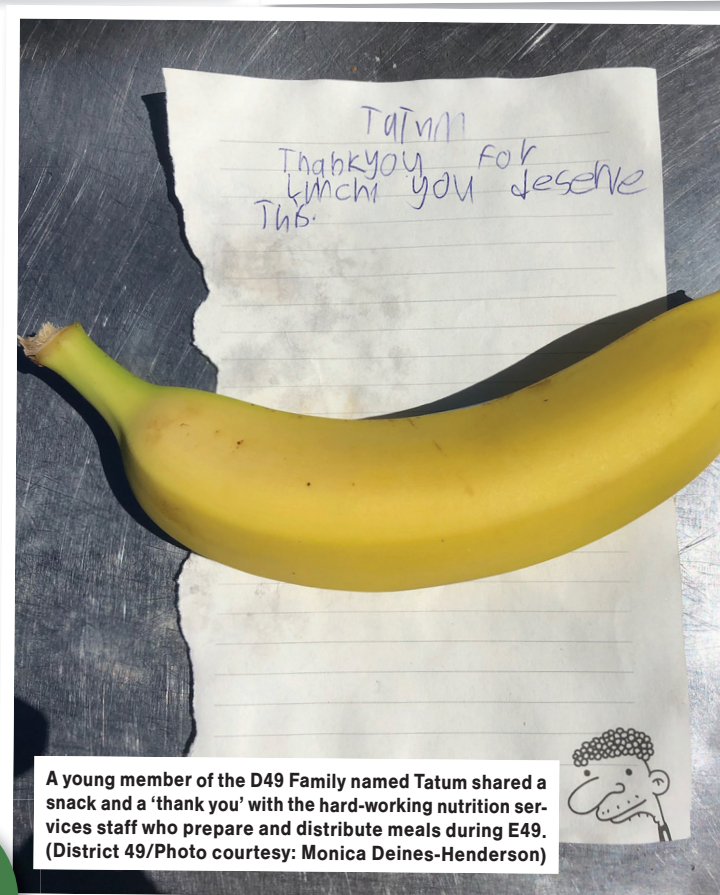
District staff cleaned and packaged Chromebooks for students in the Falcon Zone to pick up the weeks of March 23 and March 30. (District 49/Photo courtesy: Melissa Riggs)



Staff members stand ready to distribute Chromebooks to students in need in the Falcon Zone the week of March 30. (District 49/Photo courtesy: Melissa Riggs)



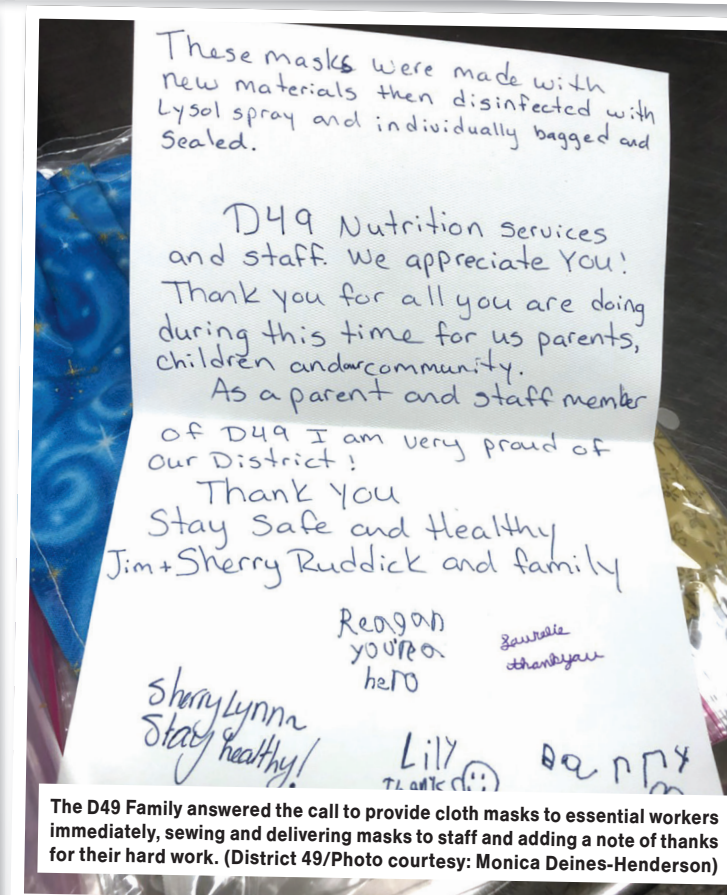
Woodmen Hills Elementary School preschool student Raelynn Lindsey got some reading done during the first week of E-learning in E49. (District 49/Photo courtesy: Carolyn Rahn)



A young member of the D49 Family named Tatum shared a snack and a 'thank you' with the hard-working nutrition services staff who prepare and distribute meals during E49. (District 49/Photo courtesy: Monica Deines-Henderson)



Staff distribute Chromebooks to students who need an electronic device at home for E-learning the week of March 30 in the POWER Zone. (District 49/Photo courtesy: Brent Buena)



The D49 Family answered the call to provide cloth masks to staff and adding a note of thanks for their hard work. (District 49/Photo courtesy: Monica Deines-Henderson)



Staff in the Sand Creek Zone hand out Chromebooks the weeks of March 23 and March 30 to families who need devices at home for the season of E-learning to begin. (District 49/Photo courtesy: Daniel DeJesus)



SES preschooler Kaiya modified her lesson (following teacher instruction) by sorting toys/letters at home to complete an assignment during E49. (District 49/Photo courtesy: Connie Schafer)



D49 invited the community to assemble cloth masks for D49 staff who continued to prepare and distribute meals along with those who carried out essential work across the district during E49. The D49 Family answered immediately, sewing and delivering masks to staff sharing grab-and-go meals. (District 49/Photo courtesy: Monica Deines Henderson)

E-Learning in the Eyes of Our Students

By Amy Matissek

Internal Communications Manager

District 49's newest classroom is now the internet, and for students, that means day-to-day school activities look a lot different. Scholars across the district have continued to learn in new and innovative ways, and have different views on today's learning style. E-learning has its good days and its challenges.

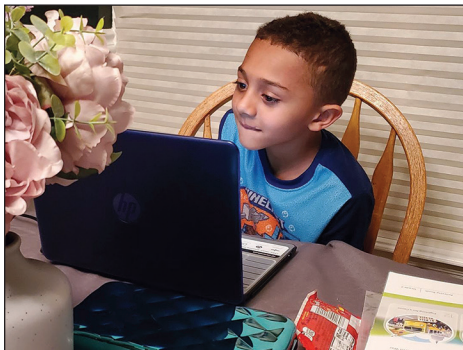
Routine is important for success in E-learning. "Although it may be tough to adjust to this type of learning, students can take advantage of it by keeping a schedule," said Alexia Montero, junior at Sand Creek High School. "One key problem I run into is trying to wake up on time in order to have enough time for my work."

Alexia offered advice to encourage her fellow Scorpion classmates. "You can do this. With resources online, it's possible to get help and stay on top of your work."

E-learning brings independence and a lesson in perseverance for high schoolers. "I can sit down and get my work done at a time and pace that fits me best," shared Kaily Valdiris, junior at Sand Creek High School. "Self-teaching is not the easiest; sometimes, it takes watching a video a couple of times and asking peers before I fully understand a new topic," she added. "However, I think that the teachers are trying their best to make this transition as smooth as possible."

Some E49 students, like Kaily, have stepped up to teach younger siblings. "Teaching is not very easy ... having to teach not only myself, but my younger brother. It's made me realize teaching is not a job for just anyone and needs to be valued and recognized a lot more."

It's not only secondary-level students who



Jeremiah Martin, second-grader at Remington Elementary, looks forward to interactive calls with his fellow Mustangs each week. (District 49/Photo courtesy: Barbie Martin)

are finding out what it's like to learn from home. Young learners in E49 are discovering how to make the most of the remote learning environment.

"I like that I can stay in my pajamas," shared Isaiah Martin, third-grader at Remington Elementary School. Along with the perk of cozy clothing, his school provides ways for students to stay engaged during E-learning. "Mrs. Georgas is making it fun by having themes for the day and sharing photos, and I love our Zoom recess." His younger brother, Jeremiah, second-grader at RES, agrees E-learning can be fun. "I like video chatting with my friends each week and the YouTube math videos."

One element of in-person learning can't be replaced by E-learning. Students and staff can find it challenging to foster relationships that sprouted at the start of the school year. "I miss seeing my teacher, Ms. Bowen, every day and I miss seeing my friends," shared fellow RES Mustang Evelyn Hobelman, second-grader. "We did a Zoom meeting once, and I really enjoyed that."

A message from District 49 Board of Education President John Graham

By John Graham

Board of Education President

The Board of Education of District 49 is in awe as we watch how YOU and our community have been rising to the challenges of world events that affect us. I have heard each Board member express amazement and gratitude for the efforts of all of YOU, our staff and teachers, in your efforts to not only educate our students, but to do your part to keep them safe and connected in our new "normal." We are humbled to be a part of such a caring and professional organization.

Despite the emotion-laden atmosphere and the many unknowns we are currently working in, YOU are all doing an amazing job of getting our kids back to that mission central activity of LEARNING! Both the D49 community and the state as a whole are watching as YOU demonstrate how D49 really is the "Best choice to learn,



work, and lead!" On behalf of the Board of Education of District 49, we would like to express our sincerest gratitude and say thank you for exceeding all expectations!"

The Board of Education has been meeting virtually to continue the "business" of oversight of District 49. We continue to refine the platform we use to ensure all interested stakeholders, including the public, can participate. The Communications Department and the Board's Executive Assistant, Donna Garza, have been instrumental in providing us the tools and resources to meet our obligations per the "Open Meeting" statutes and our high standards for transparency.

We are also very receptive to the concerns, questions, and support our stakeholders, especially students, parents, and staff have provided during this tumultuous time.

Managing Stress During COVID-19

By Dr. Kim L. Boyd, PsyD, BCBA-D

Director of Community Care

With closures and changes in our daily routines, you might feel the stress and anxiety of this worldwide pandemic. Stress and anxiety can affect our daily lives in a variety of ways:

- **Disturbances in sleep** - Having trouble falling asleep and staying asleep, as well as sleeping longer than usual.
- **Disturbances in appetite** - Some people find themselves snacking more or having little to no appetite.
- **Mood changes** - Often when under stress, people become quicker to responding in a negative way such as snapping at people or being on edge. Some may withdraw and isolate themselves both physically and socially.
- **Difficulty concentrating and staying focused** - The things we stress about often come to the forefront of our minds, making it difficult to concentrate. Sometimes, we find ourselves staring off not thinking of anything and wonder why we are having such a hard time focusing.

These are signs of stress or anxiety in adults. And, when adults are anxious, children pick up on this and may mirror our anxiety. Children can show signs of anxiety in the following ways:

- **Attention seeking behavior** - When children are anxious, they often seek out adult attention. However, when the adults are also anxious, this can become a strain on the child/adult relationship. Be mindful that your child may need extra positive attention, and plan ways to provide that during this time where routines are not typical.
- **Excessive crying and tantrums** - Your child may be scared or upset because of all the changes and may not understand what is going on. Adults need to show extra patience with children and help them feel safe.
- **Returning to younger type behaviors** - Children under stress often revert back to younger types of behaviors during times of stress. Sometimes adults do as well. Again, patience is the key while also providing a safe and caring environment.

Things We Can Do

- **Limit the exposure of news and social media.** It is important to stay informed, but there is a point of overstimulation.



Try to set a time for watching the news or browsing the internet for information. Try to engage your child in activities that do not involve the media or even electronics. This will help you, as well as your child, in managing the stress of the situation.

• Make time for your child and plan specific activities to enjoy together.

Play a board game, color, shoot some hoops in the backyard or do other things you enjoy. This will help you, as well as your child, relax.

• **Help your child feel safe and reassure them.** It is important to be honest, but not overwhelm them with information that is beyond their development level.

• **Be available for them to talk and listen to their fears and ideas without judgment.** Children and youth have their own fears and ideas about this situation. Listen to them, and try to respond honestly while reassuring they are safe.

• **Keep routines as best as you can.** Routines help us feel safe and bring comfort. Although your regular routines may be off due to closures, try to make new routines for this situation. This will help everyone in the household. Set an alarm to wake up, keep meals as regular as possible, set times to exercise, read or do homework. Post the daily schedule on a whiteboard or on the refrigerator.

• **Eat Healthy.** Often when we are stressed, we seek out comfort foods which often are not the healthiest. Your body works best when provided healthy foods like lean meats, fruits and veggies, and whole grains. It's important to try to make healthy food choices to help us sleep better and feel better especially when stressed.

• **Move and Exercise.** When everyone has to stay at home, it can feel almost impossible to get up and move. But, exercise and movement reduces that bad hormone, cortisol, that is caused by stress. When you engage in aerobic exercise and get your heart rate up, it burns off cortisol and creates more "feel good" hormones called endorphins. This can help you feel better, sleep better and generally manage stress.

Let's all work together to keep ourselves, our family members, friends, and children mentally and physically healthy during this situation.

Find more resources online about coping during the COVID-19 crisis at d49.org/community_care.

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Disinfecting the Schools



Jeremy Dreher, custodian at Vista Ridge High School, sprays disinfectant on desks and chairs. (District 49/Joel Quevillon)

By Joel Quevillon
Digital Communications Manager

With the COVID-19 pandemic moving towards the Pikes Peak Region, and students out of school for spring break, there was one obvious task for District 49.

Disinfect the schools.

“We didn’t have any coronavirus cases in the school district before spring break,” said CJ Jilek, District 49 co-director of facilities. “But disinfecting the buildings was the best management practice.”

Each building’s custodial staff is man-

aged by the principal and building manager, though the district set up the standards for the disinfecting process. More than 70 custodians and building managers worked in the District 49 schools to disinfect and clean during spring break.

“The first week the crews focused on disinfecting the classrooms and high-traffic areas,” Jilek said. “The second week they continued disinfecting, but also worked on cleaning some other areas of the buildings.”

The district’s plan was to disinfect the schools and shut down access to prevent unintended contamination.

“We allowed teachers to briefly access the schools, so they could retrieve lesson plans. Then we disinfected the high-traffic areas again,” Jilek said.

Thousands of desks and chairs were individually sprayed and wiped down by hand or fogged with disinfectant. Doors and walls were also disinfected.

“Many people don’t realize that school breaks are the busiest times for our custodians,” Jilek said. “We are more flexible and have better access to rooms without disrupting classes. We don’t have to interrupt the time teachers have with students.”

Empty buildings allow cleaning crews to deep clean by moving desks and chairs out of the way to shampoo carpets, to climb ladders to dust light fixtures and to reach windows. Though this spring break the custodians were focused on disinfecting the buildings, they did manage a few other projects.

Besides normal cleaning, a few custodians also helped in other areas. At one school, custodians helped gather student belongings and bagged them for pick up. A few custodians joined others to disinfect Chromebooks for distribution for E-learning.

“I appreciated the overall response from our staff,” Jilek said. “It was awesome to see everyone working together in order to give our students the best opportunity. They knew this was important.”

Besides cleaning crews, there were other

projects going on in some of the school buildings that Jilek needed to be finished. School breaks are also busy times for special maintenance and construction projects inside the schools.

“We asked the contractors if they could complete their jobs before we shut down access to the buildings,” Jilek said. “They understood the magnitude of this situation and were very flexible.”

A few projects were put on hold. While others, including some parking lot work and the large addition at Springs Studio, are still underway because they don’t need access to the inside of the buildings.



Besima Lopar, custodian at Vista Ridge High School, wipes down a desk. (District 49/Joel Quevillon)

Springs Studio for Academic Excellence Expansion on Track

By David Nancarrow
Director of Communications

The work will never really stop at the Springs Studio for Academic Excellence campus, which in April, is simultaneously in session remotely and expanding for the 2020-2021 school year.

“I am blown away by the progress that is made each week,” remarked SSAE Executive Principal Dave Knoche. “GH Phipps has been amazingly efficient and professional.”

Crews with GH Phipps Construction Company are doing essential work on a campus expansion, continuing to build the 21,000 square foot addition under the state’s COVID-19 guidelines. Paired with favorable weather conditions late last year, and in early 2020 prior to the in-person learning restrictions, the project is ahead of schedule.

When the building is finished, staff from Springs Studio, Pikes Peak Early College and the Falcon Homeschool Program will settle in to welcome students for the 2020-2021 school year in August.

“Leaders from PPEC, SSAE, and FHAP have been working collaboratively to foster collaborative norms of our shared space. We are already becoming a cohesive team so it will



GH Phipps construction crews work on the interior of a 21,000 sq. ft. expansion on the Springs Studio for Academic Excellence campus. The expansion is on schedule to open for the start of the 20-21 school year in August. (District 49/David Knoche)

be a smooth adjustment to our new space because the pure excitement of having a new facility will make settling in very easy,” Knoche explained.

Students who choose the flexible and innovative offerings at SSAE or PPEC in D49’s iConnect Zone have the flexibility to control their learning pathways and find post-secondary

opportunities for college. Those looking to tackle a broad range of subjects like engineering, architecture, computer science and even drone piloting can go outside of D49’s traditional brick-and-mortar campuses to find learning opportunities in the single, modern and expanded space.

“Each week it becomes more exciting about the opportunities that we can provide for kids,” Knoche said. “As we plan, we are increasing our elective portfolio to emphasize students’ pathways and more modern coursework with technological emphasis.”

The Springs Studio model offers virtual learning throughout the year, which Knoche said equipped students and staff to smoothly continue coursework during the interruption to in-person learning. Although the adjustment to the COVID-19 health emergency presented planning and management challenges to all D49 campuses, the SSAE Executive Principal observed it will likely inspire innovation district-wide.

“I hope that teachers recognize the potential of technology to complement what they do, not replace what they do,” Knoche said. “I think schools will be much more prepared for the virtual world because sometimes the best thing to do is jump in with both feet and figure it out.”

Transportation Department Works Hard Behind the Scenes

By Amy Bremser
Media Broadcast Specialist

District 49’s transportation team has been working hard behind the scenes. “We are busy coordinating routing and just finished putting our budget together for the next school year,” said district transportation director Jack Pietraallo.

The department has also started coordinating with schools and staff for ESY (summer school) bus routes. “The training team just put a lot of their training requirements online so people can do some of it from home,” said Pietraallo. “We had almost a dozen drivers and paras volunteer to clean and pass out computers and we are proud of their contributions.” The department is still

experiencing a driver shortage for the start of next year but is currently unable to hire or train any new drivers due to COVID-19 restrictions.



Bus drivers in D49 continue working in E-learning environment. (District 49/Aaron Villescascas)

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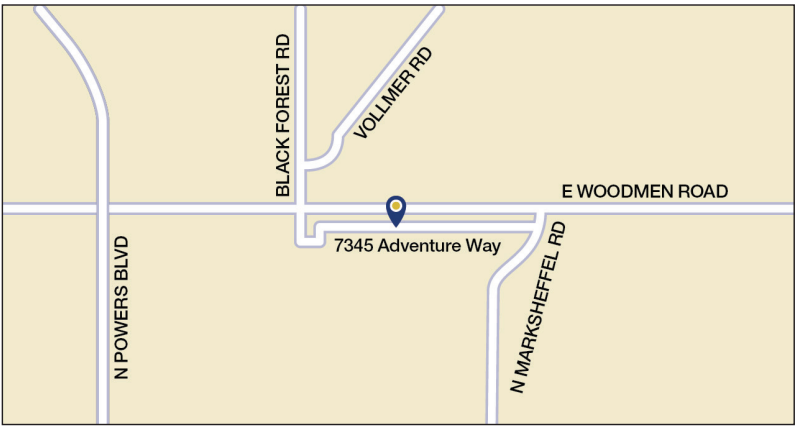
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