



710 Lane Street
P.O. Box 2708
Moultrie, Georgia 31776
229-890-6235

Press Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact:

Lou Ann Lardy

School/Community Relations Coordinator

(229) 890-6235

louann.lardy@colquitt.k12.ga.us

Instruction Continues Beyond the Classroom Walls

MOULTRIE, GEORGIA – March 23, 2020 – The Colquitt County School System has initiated a new phase in providing learning opportunities for students. Going forward, the system will provide direct instruction delivered digitally by Colquitt County teachers for students in grades K-12, for as long as applicable. These learning opportunities will not include graded assignments or assessments.

The system will utilize part of the Google Suite of communication options already in place. The district follows Federal law for filtering Internet access and online safety. Google Apps for Education are covered by more restrictive privacy practices than regular Google accounts utilized by the public; these include restrictions on advertising and the use of student data for advertising purposes.

The system's classrooms have access to various apps and services for its 9500-plus students, including live video sessions, online chat, and image/video upload. Students have a Google account via Google Apps for Education. The accounts are managed and monitored by district employees. The district will utilize Google Hangouts, a service that allows participants to initiate and participate in text, voice, or video chats either one-on-one or in a group, to provide brief sessions during which teachers will present standards-based content followed by time for discussion and question and answer sessions with the students. The Google Hangouts can be accessed through any Internet-connected device, including computers, Chromebooks, or smartphones.

Dr. Marni Kirkland, Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum and Instruction states, "Nothing can replace our teachers' daily, in-person, interactions with students, but Google Hangouts allows for two-way communication among participants and the ability to connect about content to extend learning beyond the classroom walls. These learning opportunities will not be tied to a requirement of the completion of assignments or any type of assessment."

The system will communicate the schedule of the learning opportunities with students and parents utilizing Remind, school websites, and social media platforms. Sessions will be available to students beginning on March 30th, and sessions will be recorded and sent through Remind to students and their parents enrolled in the course. Remind provides a safe way for teachers to text message students and stay in touch with parents. Teachers never see the students' or parents' phone number and likewise, the teacher's phone number is never revealed to students or parents. Students and parents can use Remind with cell phones or by email. Contact information for families is accessible for the district to utilize in Remind immediately upon enrollment in the district.

In partnership with the Colquitt County School System's Department of Instructional Technology, principals have identified teachers at each school for each grade level to lead the presentation of content to students in mathematics and English language arts in kindergarten through eighth grade. Secondary (9-12) teachers have also been identified by their principal to lead sessions in English language arts, math, science, and social studies.

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Lead teachers, school administrators, and academic coaches will receive training in the facilitation of the Google Hangouts tool by Friday, March 27th. Lead teachers will collaborate virtually with their peers to plan lessons for presentation to students. The schedule of sessions and access to links that will take students and families directly to learning opportunities will be shared utilizing Remind.

Leanne NeSmith, Director of Instructional Technology, "While the idea of online delivery of content to facilitate learning is not new to our instructional team, moving instruction fully online is an experience that teachers and leaders will pursue together. This is an opportunity for timely, job-embedded professional learning which in turn will bolster future efforts in this area."

Doug Howell, Superintendent states, "We are moving to a new level of instruction. This online effort will include many teachers, administrators, and technology personnel. Parents and students will of course be an integral part of this phase of instruction."

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