

Dear Merrimack Families~

Tonight I offer a brief reflection I came across, created by someone anonymously, that seems in keeping with our recent focus on the social/emotional impacts of this health emergency on all of us, and particularly our children. In the early days of this crisis my messages, and those of so many others, were fact based and dealt with the emerging crisis as we were experiencing it, a growing realization of the dimensions of the problem and its inevitable impacts on our lives. In those days, we were teaching and learning about hand washing and social distancing and avoiding illness and evaluating the impact of all this on our work lives, school lives and every other aspect of our whole lives. To be sure, we still deal with facts, and have many more decisions to make as a consequence of all that has happened, but as the surprise and newness of this crisis has given way to a new routine that, strange as it seems, has become, at least temporarily, a bit more familiar, we now struggle more and more to make sense of what is happening. When we think of our students, your children, we share with you the challenge of creating a way for them to remember more than just the fear and sadness of this time. For our part, we are trying to provide an education as good as we can make it, and in so doing maintain some sense of the comfort that comes with routine, of the security that comes with preparing for better days, and being ready for the next challenge. We know that as families you are working very hard to do the same, while maintaining all your workday and life challenges, and managing your own concerns.

Through it all, we can construct the memories our students, your children, have of this time. With so much out of our control, we at least have that. When we come to that wonderful day when we welcome all our students back into our schools we look forward to building on the strengths they have all gained during this time, building on the good of it and learning, even, from the bad of it, all with one singular focus; to move on from it better than before. And every day between now and then we have the ability to control how successful that day, and all the days that follow it, will be. The attached reflection, simple and short, is but one way to remind ourselves of what is still in our control. I hope you find it helpful.

Stay well.

Mark McLaughlin  
Superintendent

Child - "How old are you, Grandpa?"

Grandpa - "I'm 81, dear."

Child - "So does that mean you were alive during the Coronavirus?"

Grandpa - "Yes, I was."

Child - "Wow. That must have been horrible, Grandpa. We were learning about that at school this week.

They told us about how all the schools had closed. And moms and dads couldn't go to work so didn't have as much money to do nice things.

They said that you weren't allowed to go and visit your friends and family and couldn't go out anywhere.

They told us that the shops and stores ran out of lots of things so you didn't have much bread, and flour, and toilet rolls.

They said that summer holidays were cancelled. And they told us about all those thousands of people that got very sick and who died.

They explained how hard all the doctors and nurses and all essential workers worked, and that lots of them died, too.

That must have been so horrible, Grandpa!"

Grandpa - "Well, that is all correct. And I know that because I read about it when I was older. But to tell you the truth I remember it differently...

I remember playing in the garden for hours with mom and dad and having picnics outside and lots of BBQs.

I remember making things and fishing with my Dad and baking with my Mom.

I remember making forts and learning how to do hand stands and back flips.

I remember having quality time with my family.

I remember Mom's favorite words becoming "Hey, I've got an idea..." rather than "Maybe later or tomorrow, I'm a bit busy".

I remember making our own bread and pastry. I remember having movie night three or four times a week instead of just one. It was a horrible time for lots of people you are right. But I remember it differently." Remember how our children will remember these times. Be in control of the memories they are creating right now, so that through all the awful headlines and emotional stories for so many that they will come to read in future years, they can remember the happy times.

- Author unknown