JDS Remote Learning FAQ’s

1. When shelter in place orders came to Seattle, how did Jewish Day School respond?

The JDS Administrative Team had been closely monitoring the Covid 19 situation nationally and locally for several weeks. This included continuous information gathering and processing of updated health and safety guidelines from relevant organizations and agencies, consultation with NWAIS and other independent schools in the area, and the school’s Board of Trustees. The Admin and leadership team closely monitored student attendance, known family needs, our families’ available home technology devices, and determined the extent of our faculty who were at higher risk with the virus. Our Tech team determined the optimal platforms that would be used for remote learning. We had already made and announced a decision that we would close the campus and continue with remote learning before the orders were given in the Seattle area. On Monday, March 9, we informed families that school would be closing on Wednesday, March 11, at 12:00. At the time that we made our decision to close the campus, we were already engaged in planning for an extended closure. Manipulative and printed learning materials were prepared for each Early Childhood and Elementary student for families to pick. Laptops were sent home with students in grades 2/3 and 4/5, MS students already have laptops, and IPADs were sent home with each K/1 student. Additional equipment was ordered (document cameras.) In the final days of school on campus, Kindergarteners through MS students practiced skills they would be using with Microsoft Teams at home.

2. How quickly did you start online learning? How are you doing it?

Planning and collaborative meetings had already been underway, led by our leadership team. Schedules for remote learning were developed for Early Childhood, K/1, 2/3, 4/5 and Middle School. We used our final days on campus (March 11-13, Wednesday afternoon, Thursday and Friday) for professional development and training in teaching remotely and using online formats and technology. Teams collaborated and teachers tested out these formats with our Tech team. Classroom/grade specific communications were sent home about the remote learning plans. A “Ramp-Up” schedule was developed for the first week (3 days) of remote learning. Teachers and teams used Monday and Tuesday, March 16-17, to work on remote lessons.
3. What other things are you doing online?
Our remote learning includes full class groups, small groups, and individualized meetings to respond to student needs. Family/parent check-ins and meetings also take place. As in school, class Shabbat takes place online for all grade levels. The students continue to have math, literacy, science, inquiry, social studies, Jewish studies and Hebrew as well as specialists in art, music, and P.E..

4. How do you continue to make community, chesed, and connection a reality during this pandemic?
Maintaining a sense of community is at the core of our remote learning goals and we recognize how the separation impacts all members of the school community. We are striving to have ongoing and responsive communication with students, families, faculty and staff. We have maintained our routines as much as possible for faculty and students. While it is not the same, we follow the same schedule for faculty and team meetings. We designed the class schedule for and with the class schedules for learning. Morning Meetings continue and begin each day. We have revised our remote learning schedule and instruction along the way, based on feedback from families. Our teachers have reached out individually to each family to get their input on how their child is doing with the remote learning. Students share and enjoy seeing each other during the live sessions. As much as possible, we try to convey that we value and love each student. Early Childhood and Elementary students share their responses and work through a photo or video they post onto Seesaw, for classmates and teachers to see.

5. Ten years from now, how do you think students will remember this time?
Of course, this will vary from student to student, but hopefully, they will remember with some positivity, the time they had school at home (in their room, in their dining room...) and connected with their teachers and friends through their tech device, how we were all trying out something new and unfamiliar – together. They will remember missing being at school and the social opportunities, and how they looked forward to the online times.

6. Is there anything else you'd like to add?
Feedback from our families has been very positive, and appreciation has been shared frequently. We realize that for some families, this time presents many
challenges, and we have tried to be responsive and supportive. Our attendance has been excellent. Remote instruction requires great effort and energy from our teachers. They are rising to this challenge!