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Dear CISD Parents and Families,

As we are on this unprecedented break unlike any in the past, here are some thoughts about how to help children, teens, and even adults, make the most of your time together.

These ideas are about:

- Making connections while following CDC guidance on social isolation,
- Taking action to reduce anxiety, and
- Creating positive and productive environments in our own homes with our children.

Making connections

Collectively, we must understand the importance of “flattening the curve” and do our part to slow the spread of the virus by practicing social distancing. However, separating ourselves because of COVID-19 could come with increased loneliness - so we need to find different ways to maintain social connections. Here are a few ways to do that:

- Try reaching out to friends and family via phone call, text, video chat writing letters, or whatever means of communication that works.
- Take care of yourself. You can't give what you don't have. To connect well and help others, we need to be physically and emotionally strong and steady.
- Maintain an optimistic mindset. It's extraordinary what people can accomplish when they pull together to serve a cause greater than themselves.

Taking Action to Reduce Anxiety

Dr. David Burns, author, researcher, and professor of psychiatry and behavioral sciences, reminds us that we can fall into the trap of waiting for motivation - we put off tasks until we're in the mood or we feel like it. But motivation actually works the other way around. Motivation follows productive action and leads to a positive feedback loop of feeling good and wanting to continue the actions or habits we've started.

To get motivated, consider making a list of things you've been wanting to get done as a family and take steps to get started today. You could help support healthcare workers on the front lines of COVID-19, declutter and donate items, paint a room, or take an online course.

And if you're struggling during this time please remember to reach out for help. Here are some useful resources.

- New Mexico Crisis Line 1-855-662-7474 is available 24 hours a day for any kind of emotional crisis, mental health or substance use concern.
- The Warm Line 1-855-466-7100 offers peer assistance and a listening ear.

PO Box 70, #50 County Rd 13, Cuba, NM 87013, Phone: 575-289-3211, Fax: 575 289-3314

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- National Suicide Prevention Lifeline - If you are concerned about yourself, a friend, or a family member, call 1-800-273-(TALK) 8255 or text START to 741741. If you are having a life threatening emergency, call 911 immediately.

Creating Positive and Productive Environments

Here are some ways we can create positive and productive environments in our own homes with our children during this Break:

- Our children can thrive with routines. Consider keeping regular bedtime and morning routines, sitting down for lunch at the same time as they do at school, and establishing a daily schedule so that they know the plan for the day. Keeping these small things consistent can help our kids feel regulated, calm and confident.
- Getting outside for some fresh air is an ideal way for our children to move their bodies. Take a walk or ride a bicycle. Indoor options include Gonoodle.com and Cosmickids.com for whole body movement and yoga videos. If you are looking for options other than video-based activities, consider building a pillow fort, keeping balloons off the ground, having a dance party or setting up a homemade obstacle course.
- Work on broader Executive Functioning (EF) skills. EF includes skills such as problem solving, time management, goal setting and organization. Provide sorting activities, set a daily goal, or play some problem-solving games such as Heads-up, Charades or Guess Who.

Practice gratitude.

Every day, take a few minutes to write down something for which you are grateful. I am grateful for the wonderful staff and parents of the Cuba Independent School District. During these last few weeks, they have proven to be flexible, creative, and resilient. Gratitude helps keep you emotionally strong and will help you connect better with others.

Let's all help one another through these new challenges. As we continue to adapt to the changing public health situation, our guidance for students and parents is evolving as well. At this time, it is unclear when the children will go back to school. The New Mexico Public Education Department currently lists April 6, 2020 as the return to school date for students. I will continue to stay in touch with you on a regular basis as we learn more.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Dr. Karen Sanchez-Griego', with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Dr. Karen Sanchez-Griego, Ed.D
CISD Superintendent

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