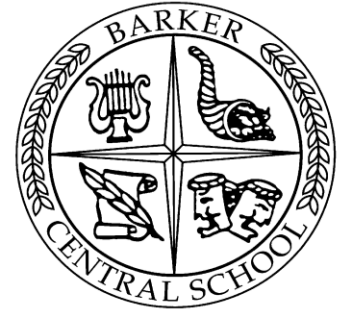


# Barker Central School

1628 Quaker Road, Barker, New York 14012-0328

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12/21/20

Hello Barker Families & Students:

As we head into holiday break, we wanted to reach out again to our families and students regarding this unique school year. It goes without saying that 2020 is not what any of us signed up for – parents, students, and teachers alike. But against incredible odds, Barker has been moving forward. We wanted to take a moment to address a few items before moving into the second half of the school year.

Over the past few weeks, the district has conducted a couple of student surveys. One involved input on student social/emotional state in grades 3-12. We also asked students at the high school to give their feedback on the current hybrid learning model. There was a very common theme among the input at all grade levels and across the two surveys: students are feeling overwhelmed this year. Whether it is the after-hours workload, not being in school and having in-person access to teachers for support, or an increase in responsibilities (like taking care of younger siblings), students of all ages have more to cope with than many of us did at their age. School is extending beyond school “hours” more than ever.

We wish to take some time here to try to address some of these student concerns. While none of these items will be perfect for any family or student, we hope it is a good place to start.

1. Over the past week in grades 3-6, Mr. Rogers and our Mental Health Specialist Mrs. Bannister have been doing mini-lessons regarding self-wellness. Students have been very open and participating in utilizing the strategies and self-help tips. They will be continuing to work with students after break and starting to work with the younger grade levels.
2. We are very much trying to do as best we can to maintain many of the normal elementary traditions and routines alive and well. This is important for our younger kids, especially in PreK-4. We are still celebrating the holidays and having building-wide events as able. An example of this was Halloween trick or treating; we are also having some holiday surprises for our younger students before break.
3. At the Jr./Sr. High School level, we are planning on rolling out similar and age-appropriate student meetings as well in January. Students can also benefit from mindfulness activities, like yoga, crafting, etc. that they can participate in. Students really are having a difficult time bonding with one another this year due to not being in school five days and also the delay of athletics, and hopefully things like this can help some of them replace these.
4. After the Holiday Recess, at the Junior Senior High School level, we will "pause" from assigning homework on Fridays that will be due on Mondays. Note that this “pause” does not mean longer term assignments cannot be due on a Monday if already assigned; owed work completion can still continue. Also, we will transition to having all assignment due at a normal “school day hour”, and not something like 11:59 pm on a Friday. This will hopefully

- help train students to spend the school day hours getting their work completed instead of waiting until the last minute or evening hours to get things done.
5. We cannot urge the importance of communication enough. If a parent feels that a teacher needs to know something, please do not hesitate in reaching out to our faculty. The direct and open communication between faculty and families is so important. Students should not feel uncomfortable with this happening, so please do not let this prevent anyone from doing so.

We realize there is still a long way to go this year. Hopefully some of these items will help students. If any family feels that their child may need additional help coping with this year, again, please do not hesitate to reach out. Our school has many relationships and resources with outside agencies who can lend a hand. Nobody is alone in their challenges this year.

Thank you all for your continued support of the school. We appreciate everyone's work and vigilance through this trying time.

Michael Carter  
Principal, Barker Central School District