Dear Pinto Parents & Patrons,

The recent impact of COVID-19 around the world, and across our country, has certainly forced everyone out of their comfort zone and forced countless decision makers to make decisions that they never would have expected to make. Our recent school closure, along with countless others across the nation, is evidence of that. However, even though the California School District has temporarily closed, we continue to find ways to provide learning opportunities to our students and continue to monitor the status of COVID-19. We are also in regular contact with and working directly with other agencies including the State Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE), Moniteau County Health Center, and Moniteau County Office of Emergency Management. We will continue to evaluate the status of the coronavirus and will be prepared to modify our plans as necessary.

In an effort to continue to provide you with updates on the district’s current plans related to COVID-19, we have the following information to share:

• District leaders and building principals are meeting regularly to discuss facility and academic plans for when students return to school.
• The district has been working hard to prepare alternative methods of instruction for students at all levels, including elementary, middle, and high school, and will be available via email throughout our closure period. Teachers will be checking emails and responding within 24 hours of receiving them (except during the week of Spring Break). Should you or your child have questions during this time, please reach out to your teachers.
• The district will be focusing on disinfecting our buildings during the closure period. These disinfecting efforts will focus on high-touch areas including light switches, doorknobs, railings, and keyboards among others. Efforts will also include sanitizing our school buses.
• The district will be providing FREE Grab ‘N Go Meals for our students during the school closure. Meals will be available every weekday from 11:30-1:00 beginning Thursday, March 19 until our schools reopen. Drive-thru pickup will be provided in the circle drive of the elementary school so families will not have to enter the school. Families can pick up breakfast and lunch (1 breakfast & lunch for each child ages birth-18). We will also have limited delivery for families that do not have transportation available. Per the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE), children must be present to pick up food. No ID or paperwork will be required.
• Learning packets have been sent home with elementary students, and middle school and high school students will be receiving virtual instruction from their teachers through the use of their Chromebooks.
• The district has also cancelled all extracurricular activities/practices during this time of shut down, but we do look forward to all things returning to normal once we are able to resume school.
• The CDC has a resource for families about talking with your children and identifying best practices when coping with COVID-19: https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/about/coping.html.

As we spend our spring break and extended school closure time with our families, there may be a number of questions regarding family travel plans. We encourage you to follow the travel guidance being provided by the CDC. You can review that information here: https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/travelers/index.html.

Additional resources and information are also available on the CDC website: https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-nCoV/summary.html

The Missouri Department of Health and Senior Services (DHSS) has activated a statewide public hotline for citizens or providers needing guidance regarding the novel coronavirus, or COVID-19. The hotline can be reached at 877-435-8411. The hotline is being operated by medical professionals and is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

This is an extremely trying time, and we want to thank you for your continued care and concern. We strive to provide as much educational normalcy as we can for your children during a time when everything seems to be all but normal, and we look forward to the opportunity to greet them at the doors once school resumes. We will continue to remain vigilant and share information as it becomes available from lead health agencies. Stay safe, stay healthy, stay Pinto strong!

Sincerely, Dwight Sanders, Superintendent

Because district closure due to Covid-19 has been extended to May 4, all school events are also canceled through that time.

California teachers parade streets of California to greet students safely

On the afternoon of Wednesday, April 1 California teachers ventured through neighborhoods of California to say “hello” to students without breaking the social distancing advisory.

“The teachers decided to do the parade because we are really missing our students,” Andrea Hill said. Hill is from California and has taught there for many years.

“We want the students to know that we are thinking about them and hoping that everything is going well.” The parade of cars decked in Pinto pride and filled with waving teachers brought smiles to the faces of students and community members at large. Having been publicized through Facebook and school websites, many in town knew of the parade.

Some families had messages of their own to share with the teachers. Many houses and driveways were also dressed in Pinto gear with cheering fans waving from the yards.

Hill said the teachers want the students to know that “even though we are apart, we still care and want what is best for them.”

The parade idea originated with Danielle Morrow, second grade teacher, and Scott Harkins, school resource officer. They were looking for something safe and would abide by social distancing rules.

It has been said over and over that this is a “challenging time,” but it is in challenging times that our true nature shows. The truth is, California teachers really do care for their students.
Distance learning is uncharted territory for students, teachers, parents
by Christy Heimericks

In the wake of Covid-19, students were sent home, some with packets and some with the promise of communication to come. Parents (even those who continue their work duties from home or not) have to figure it out from there. Uncharted territory!

Like the journey of Lewis and Clark, as uncharted territory goes, there is no “right way,” and you never know how it will go. If those men could make such an incredible journey with no map or internet to give them guidance, surely I can get four kids through lessons put together by knowledgeable, caring teachers.

I used spring break to clean the garage and make a place at an old dining room table for “Mommy School.” I hoped this designated space would get the kids into the right mindset each morning as we leave the house and “go to school.” The garage also eliminates the distraction of food on the kitchen counter and television in the family room.

Next, I made a schedule that is generic enough to work for all of my kids second through sixth grades. Finally, I made a list for each child so that I could easily check off completed subjects; otherwise, they would happily tell me they were done long before they were done. And so, let the games begin...

I messaged several of my friends, and none of our “home schools” look the same. Some are at dining room tables, and some on the floor. Some are in their pajamas, and some keep food on the ready at all times. Some work with mom by their side, and others (usually older students) handle it all on their own.

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Similarly each teacher has provided work differently. Some sent week-long work; others have daily tasks. Some send communication each morning; others send communication multiple times throughout the day.

I do feel more in tune with what my kids have been studying, what they know and don’t know, what they like and don’t like about school, and how each one learns. For now, it is an interesting journey, and although we don’t know what is in store for the coming months, the discoveries might be worth the challenge.

Alternatives for outdoor recess during poor weather
By Jordan Bondurant

Indoor recess happens often during the wintertime, which can be both good and bad. The kids prefer being outside, but indoor recess allows them to do different activities.

“The kids always want to go to recess, but would rather be outside,” said Andrea Hill, third grade teacher and a recess supervisor.

There are always two supervisors on duty for recess whether it’s inside or outside.

They try to go outside for recess any time they can. The only time they have it inside is if it’s raining, snowing, or the temperature is 32 degrees or less.

Miranda Needy, a paraprofessional with pre-k, said, “Students need to be outside, with a large space to run around. While the students love the options of the gym and multipurpose room for indoor recess and the change of scenery, they do not get to run nearly as much as outdoor recess or have the fresh air.”

Pre-k gets two 20-minute recess periods, kindergarten through third get two 15-minute recess periods, and fourth through fifth get one 30-minute recess period.

Indoor recess does provide many activities for the kids to choose from.

Additionally, during the P.E. swimming unit, which is seven weeks between January and February, the kids get to use the gym. Here they get to run around, play with basketballs, play with bouncy balls, and play tag.

When they have recess in the multipurpose room, different centers are available including coloring, magnetic tiles, Legos, wooden blocks, train sets, wooden dominoes, Lincoln logs, and more. PTO purchases games to keep them busy if they have to be inside.

Hill said, “We are very fortunate at our school to have different places in the building to go for indoor recess such as the gym or multipurpose room. This gives students opportunities to still play with friends even though the weather is bad.”
Each day of spirit week, F.O.R. members bring out the kindhearted kids that encourage them to problem solve and experiment,” Luebbert said. The kids have to concentrate because melting wax dries quickly. They have to be ready and be careful when they work on their landscape. Once the wax dries, it sets as is.

Luebbert said, “We have been working with the Cray Pens for about a week. Leading up to working with the pens, the students sketch out and design their landscapes and then transfer them to canvas.”

The students make multiple layers with the wax to add lots of detail and make their landscape more sculptural. Evy McGill, a California Middle Schooler said, “It’s hard in the beginning, but once you get used to the materials it gets easier.” The students have been working on their landscapes for several weeks.

While homework helper is an after-school program, ninth hour happens during the last thirty minutes of each school day. The purpose of ninth hour is to provide time for students to complete both current and late/missing homework. It is like a study hall for everyone in the building with the students divided among all of the teachers in the building. During this time, they are allowed to seek help from specific teachers before the school day is over.

“They are free to use that time in any productive, quiet manner,” said Principal Matt Abernathy.

Homework helper...Ninth hour...Blitz day...RTI are the variety of programs at CMS meant to boost student success. Homework helper is to provide additional time after school for students to complete work and receive assistance from a teacher. This program occurs Monday through Thursday from 3:10 to 4:10. Students can voluntarily stay or be required to stay.

“It is a smaller class setting, so students receive more individualized instruction and assistance,” Mona Spayde, seventh grade English teacher, said.

There is one teacher a day to assist with sixth graders and another teacher each day who assists with seventh and eighth graders.

“I think it really helps create a good personality in kids. It really helps them to get home, after they graduate, and get a good job in the real world. It helps them to think about working hard and working on their future,” said Abernathy. “Blitz day and RTI have been in place for four years.”

Blitz day occurs on one random day each week during ninth hour. Kids that don’t meet the requirements must stay with the teacher in whose class the student has missing work, late homework, a D, or F.

It is unexpectedly announced to the students, and those who meet the requirements are allowed to go to the gym, library, two different rooms where they can play games, or the cafeteria where they can socialize with friends.

Response to Intervention (RTI) is a time for teachers to reteach concepts in an effort to improve knowledge and performance on assessments. They use data from building assessments to determine concepts that students are struggling with. RTI is a 30-minute block of time that occurs every day.

Abernathy said the four programs work together to “provide additional times for students to complete work, receive teacher assistance, receive reteaching opportunities on certain concepts, and offer opportunities for students to be rewarded weekly for working hard and performing well in school.”
Student council joins with Special Olympic athletes

By Nathan Ahart

Recently Russellville High School’s student council hosted a 3-on-3 basketball tournament in which Special Olympic athletes teamed up with their local stu-co members (unified partners). California student council was excited to participate.

“We had several that wanted to go, but we only had two Special Olympic athletes, so we only took two unified partners,” said advisor Jamie Johnston.

This experience had a big impact by seeing all of the athletes be able to be themselves, to compete, and to have fun. In fact, several student council members signed up to help with a spring track meet at Battle High School in April, but the event was canceled due to Covid-19.

“The Special Olympic athletes are very special people who bring joy to everything they do. Our members get to experience this joyful environment with them. You can’t help but smile when you are with them,” Johnston said.

California’s student council has partnered with Special Olympics all eight years that they have been members of MASC, Missouri Association of Student Councils.

CHS is lucky to have two great advisors. Johnston has been an advisor for ten years, along with Ashley Atteberry for seven years. The student council has its own fundraisers for Special Olympics that include t-shirt sales, penny wars, miracle minute, and Polar Plunge participation.

California’s student council has never hosted their own Special Olympic event, but they are planning to host in the future, possibly a Bocce Ball tournament according to Atteberry.

“A couple of our athletes were nervous about the Russellville event, but at the end of the day they had fun and were ready to show off their medals,” Atteberry said. “We were very inspired after seeing how many of the athletes had fun and we can’t wait to eventually put on our own event.”

Fish fry tops off FFA week for California chapter

By Jordan Bondurant

FFA week is a week to celebrate FFA and ag education with the students, school, and community.

FFA week is always around the end of February, usually the week of or the week after President’s Day. During this week the local chapter puts together fun, interactive activities for its members.

The activities for this year included dress up days, scavenger hunt, teacher’s lunch, Cargill breakfast, and a fish fry. The FFA officers plan the activities for FFA week.

During the Cargill breakfast some of the Cargill workers came to the ag building before school to give out shirts and other supplies along with biscuits and gravy.

Chapter members paid to participate in a fish fry during Friday lunch. This was a new venture this year.

Adam Bieri, ag instructor and FFA advisor, said, “It’s nice to switch it up a little bit each year. The fish fry was added this year because the students wanted to do something involving food.”

California has 247 total students involved in FFA, which is a majority of the student population.

The week went smooth, and the fish fry was the best part for most of the students. They enjoyed the food and hope to keep it a part of next year’s FFA week activities.

sounds of joy is directed by Michele Bilyeu who is in her 13th year at California High School.

This year’s Sounds of Joy has 23 members. Auditions for the group consist of tonal memory, sight reading, preparing a solo of their own choice, and singing “My Country Tis of Thee.”

The Sounds of Joy have concerts every fall, winter and spring. The choir also competes in conference, district and state music contests. They also perform in a musical, at the Ham and Turkey Festival, at school functions, and occasionally at churches.

The members learn on average over 20 songs a year. Each member has to take a Sounds of Joy class during the school day.

Bilyeu said, “it’s not difficult for the members to learn new songs. They have to learn music pretty quickly because of many events happening in a certain period of time.”

“Scheduling around different events that the members participate in is probably the most difficult thing about Sounds of Joy. Many of the members are involved in other extra curricular activities as well as Sounds of Joy that correspond all in the same period of time,” said Bilyeu.

Performing at events and traveling around for contests is not only Bilyeu’s favorite part of Sounds of Joy but the members’ favorite part too.

Naki Dauti, a senior member of Sounds of Joy, said, “My favorite part about Sounds of Joy is how we get to go to different places to sing and how we have competitions at other schools. It’s a really great experience to be a part of a group.”

In my room . . . Performance, competition group brings joy

By Brookelynn Waldrop

In my room . . . Performance, competition group brings joy

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