

Dear Parents and Friends,

I hate to use the worn out expression “challenging times” to describe school life, and life in general, during this pandemic. However, it is an apt term for our students, our families, and our teachers. I feel there are several points that we should keep in mind to help encourage us right now.

1. I haven’t said enough about the efforts our teachers have made to order and assemble the kits our students have needed especially, but not exclusively, for the technology classes. These kits required careful planning, purchasing, and assembly by our teachers as we were not able to order tailor-made kits for our classes.



2. Everyone in the Spark Community has worked hard (an understatement) to make this situation work as well as possible. Our parents and students are tired, and our teachers are tired. However, all of you continue to make the best effort possible to help our students learn. I want to thank all of you for your dedication.

3. Grades were tough overall for our students. I know that some school districts cut back greatly on expectations as a way of coping with hybrid and remote learning challenges. Our teachers have worked together and with me to attempt to reduce the workload for our students. However, Spark Academy includes certain realities that constrain us to maintaining very high expectations for both teachers and students.

- a. Most Spark semester courses carry the weight and content of full-year

courses in other high schools.

- b. Our teachers are working to prepare our students for the rigors of college courses beginning in their third year with our MCC Early College Program and even in their second year with Running Start classes. We would be failing our students if we did not keep this important transition in mind.
- c. Families of students with failing grades for the first semester will receive options for academic recovery toward the end of next week. Our goal is not only to assign passing credit for courses, but that our students have sufficient grasp of the content and skills needed to succeed as they move forward. Ultimately, we



## Tools for Self Monitoring



**Strict Workflow** – temporarily blocks social media and other time-wasting websites  
**Leech Block** (Chrome, Firefox) – uses timers to block or allow website access  
**Mindful Browsing** (Chrome) – gently nudges students away from time-wasting sites  
**Rescue Time** (Android, iOS, Linux, macOS, Web, Windows) – tracks productivity and blocks distracting sites  
**Stay Focused** (Chrome) – blocks sites in Chrome  
**Focus Keeper Pro** – uses a timer to help keep students on task longer

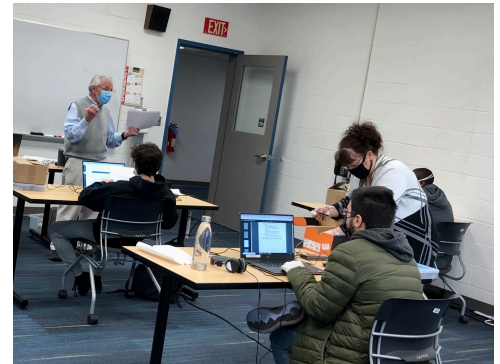
want them to be ready for those college courses.

4. The Canvas system, though one that helps deliver remote content more effectively than most other systems, is experiencing growing pains in its adaptation to high school needs. I thank you all for your patience and thank our teachers for their concerted efforts to make the system as user friendly as possible for all.

It is difficult for parents to provide their students with the support needed to learn and work from home. It can be tough for adults to do so and much more so for students.

Staying focused in a world of internet distractions is, not surprisingly, a common challenge. The following tools may help you to support your student in staying focused on their school work.

This Wednesday, the 10th, will bring the first in a series of new opportunities for our students to explore career options virtually. This series has been organized by the Kristin Knarr, the Extended Learning Opportunities Coordinator for Conval High School. We understand that the series will consist of 15 sessions, presumably on Wednesdays. Should the presentation dates change, we will adjust our schedules accordingly. These events will feature tours of NH manufacturing companies.



Wednesdays will feature some additional changes as we will be including at-home art work that should connect well with our students' tech classes.

One, two, and three point perspective drawing classes will help our students understand their tech software better by going old school and working with perspective on paper. The kits shown here will be taken home by students or mailed home. Sometimes it's good to step back from the conveniences of modern technology in order to understand the logic behind it.



Once again, I thank you for your hard work and patience as we move through this pandemic. I thank you also for remaining vigilant in protecting your family and the Spark Community from the threat of Covid.

Lastly, I want to thank everyone for supporting us as we work to let the greater community know about Spark. Our virtual open houses appear to be succeeding thanks to

the work of many of you. Our first cohort of 15 students appears to be full for next year! Our next virtual open house will be taking place on **Wednesday, March 3, at 6:30 pm**. The Zoom link can be found on the Spark Website Calendar.



Sincerely,

Denis Mailloux  
Director