

# Turtle Talk

March 2021

## KEEPING STUDENTS ENGAGED AND MOTIVATED AMIDST THE PANDEMIC CHAOS

### March & April Dates to Remember

Mon., Mar. 15th - Fri., Mar. 19  
Spring Holiday  
**SCHOOL CLOSED**

In March 2020, in the midst of the academic school year, the global pandemic disrupted learning in a way never known before. Because the quarantine happened so abruptly, emergency virtual learning systems had to be built almost immediately, which led to unprecedented learning loss for millions of children worldwide.

At TRM, our teachers have always worked very hard to create a strong, bonded community in their respective classrooms and this has continued through the multi-level learning platform. The social-emotional component of school has been emphasized at TRM as strongly as the academic component before, during and after the quarantine.

Mon., Mar. 22nd  
Professional Development Day  
**SCHOOL CLOSED**

Our virtual students are completely integrated into the in-person classroom environment. They are on project teams with in-person students, and we celebrate their birthdays virtually where they receive the “gift of words,” a traditional TRM ceremony when the entire class including teachers, tells the student what they love about them. In the upper classrooms, Classroom Meetings continue virtually, so students are free to discuss issues that concern them. Teachers schedule weekly check-ins with virtual students and find unique ways for the virtual students to participate in the holiday parties and events held on campus. These measures create a strong, bonded community.

Fri., Apr. 2nd  
Spring Holiday  
**SCHOOL CLOSED**

### **We connect Relevant Work to Purpose**

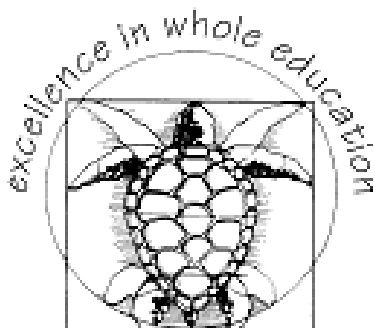
To keep students motivated to learn, it is critical to clearly communicate purpose and relevance in the coursework and design activities that students find relevant and exciting. When students find learning meaningful, they show greater interest in their schoolwork, and are better able to “learn deeply.”

Fri., Apr. 30th  
Professional Development Day  
**SCHOOL CLOSED**

At TRM relevance is built into every unit of study through the use of the essential questions that encourage students to think critically and create their own opportunities to connect what they are learning to their own lives, as well as to real-world applications

For instance, in our middle school classroom, the students are working on ‘Passion Presentations’. Students were asked to consider the question, “What’s my purpose?” This forced them to think about what fills their bucket and makes them happy, rather than doing something because they should or because someone else expects them to do it. They will share their presentations with their classmates and teachers. This process requires deeper thinking and a true understanding of who they are and what their purpose is.

Essential questions allow them to approach learning about their units of study in deeper, more meaningful ways. These essential questions are webbed through every unit of study and are based on relevance to that particular unit. Examples of essential questions for units of study:



## Junior High School Level

Unit of Study: WW II

Essential Question: Does a belief in moral superiority ever justify an immoral act?

## Upper Elementary

Unit of Study: American Revolution

Essential Question: Why do we challenge authority, and when is it ok?

## Lower Elementary

Unit of Study: Biomes, Fundamental needs, Land and Water Forms

Essential Question: What is home?

Guiding Questions: How does that affect who I am? Is change a positive or negative force?

## We instill a 'Growth Mindset' and Failing Forward

"A willingness to confront challenges, a passion for learning, and viewing failure as a springboard for growth are all characteristics of a growth mindset." Growth mindset concepts teach resilience and are constantly woven into the classroom and into social interactions at TRM.

Failing forward is about learning from your mistakes.

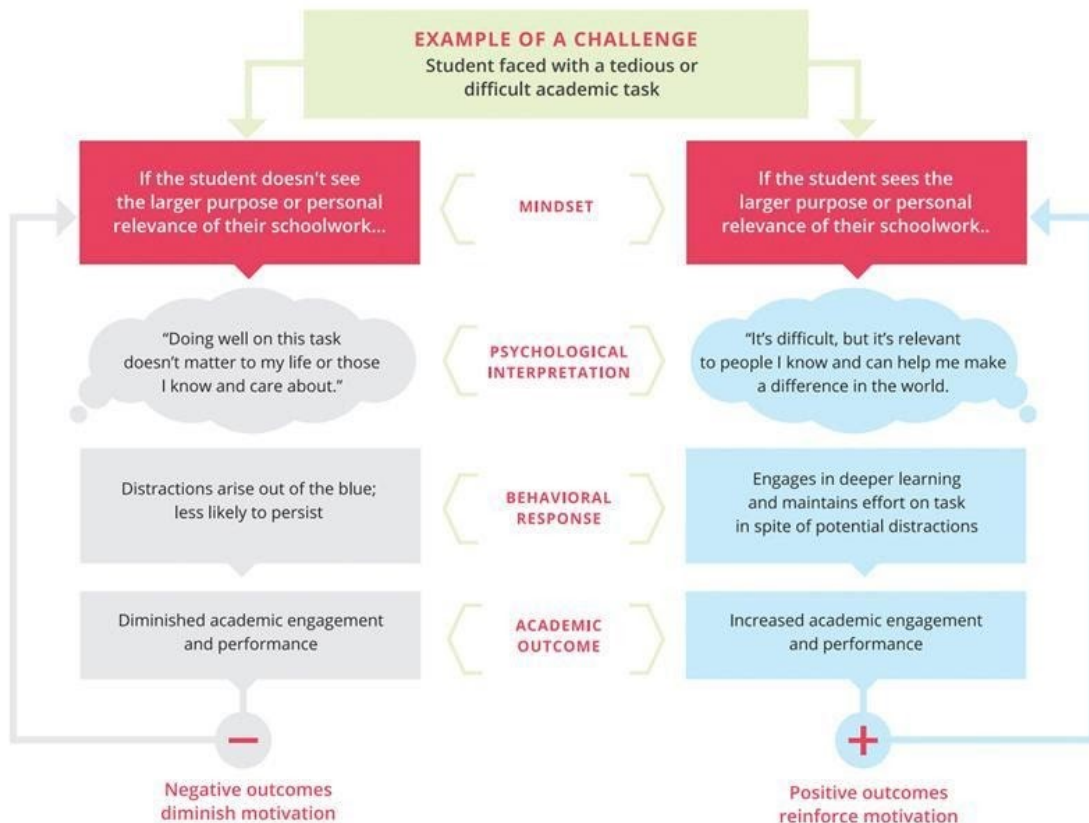
Research shows that allowing students to feel free to fail produces students who take academic risks that help them to achieve more. Challenging experiences help us develop particular coping and problem-solving skills that students will need as they grow and mature.

Our teachers create classroom climates that allow students to feel comfortable making mistakes and asking teachers or peers for help. This is encouraged and facilitated frequently- one example is the creation of the middle school writing mentors. Middle school students mentor the 4th-6th grade Cedar students and meet virtually to review their writing assignments.

Creating a strong community, making schoolwork relevant, and nurturing a growth mindset in our students are among the many best practices TRM continues to employ during this challenging time for our kids. We will look back on this time, knowing that our students were given the best opportunity to become lifelong, motivated, self-directed learners, not having suffered the Covid-19 slide alongside millions of students worldwide.

<https://www.edutopia.org/article/science-keeping-kids-engaged-even-home>

<https://blogs.worldbank.org/education/covid-19-slide-education-real>



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## A VIRTUAL GALA!!!!

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### Our Strength Comes from Our Support of One Another

So many families have stepped up to support TRM during this extraordinary time.

Every family adds a piece to the TRM story. TRM needs your support to help us get through this challenging time, so let us pull together to honor the commitment that was made to hold our community together with zero layoffs and doors open. To help rebuild our school's foundation in a fun and engaging way, we are hosting a 'Virtual Gala' and need your support.

Please reach out to the Gala Team if you:

- Have something to donate
- Know a business we should reach out to

Want to join the Gala Team to help plan the amazing, virtual event we have started planning

### TRM's Commitment to its Families

Because social-emotional wellbeing is so important at TRM, every effort was made to open school to interested families in Fall, 2020. This was an enormous undertaking that required a large, unexpected investment of time and capital. Several initiatives had to be purchased, designed, and implemented quickly in order for this to happen.

- Large plexiglass partitions- purchased and built
- UV filters- purchased and installed in the air conditioning system (cost over \$10,000)
- UV lights- put in each classroom every evening
- Extra staff- hired to facilitate both virtual and in-person classes simultaneously
- High quality/industrial sized foggers- purchased to be used with non-toxic sanitizing solutions (teachers fog classrooms twice daily)
- Temperature kiosks- purchased (\$2500 each unit) in addition to touchless thermometers (and measures were put in place to take and log temperatures daily)
- Multiple automated hand sanitizer dispensers- purchased for every room and common area
- Chairs- purchased for outdoor classes

- A multitude of overhead shade-producing sails- purchased to facilitate outdoor classes
- Personal neck fans- purchased in bulk for students to use during outside classes (during warm months)

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### Poinciana's Valentine's Day Volleyball Game Students vs Dad

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