

STEVENSON

March 20, 2020

Dear Stevenson Students:

I write to you as we near the end of our first week as an online community. I have been overwhelmed by our teachers' remarkable ability to pivot from classroom teaching to remote instruction in just three days. Also, we are all so impressed with the way you have reacted to this challenge, exhibiting the care and compassion that helps make Stevenson such a special community. On Wednesday, I was energized by reconnecting with my advisee group, and saw how ready they are to take on this new and unexpected endeavor. Everyone wants to stay engaged with one another and with our School community.

My point in writing is a simple one, and relates to Dr. Hicks' remarks during the special Assembly on Thursday afternoon before you all left campus. With our shift to this indefinite period of remote instruction, it is essential that we hold true to our core values of safety, respect, trust, belonging, and inclusion. As we spend more time online for classes and to connect with one another, our conduct is of paramount importance. As you've heard me and many others say, your character is expressed by your actions when you think no one is watching. We are counting on you to rise to the level of trust we're extending in this moment, and need you to help us through this hard time by making good choices in spaces that are no longer as readily visible to teachers, advisors, coaches, residential faculty, administrators, and staff.

The need for this note is prompted by reports from several of you that some peers are not being as respectful of others as they should be; that a few, for example, are texting derogatory comments to friends about their classmates during online class discussions. Such behavior contradicts our School's values, and must cease. Beyond that, if you're among the handful of students who have fallen prey to such a temptation, check yourself. In such a totally disorienting moment, feelings of isolation, fear, and uncertainty can lead to self doubt and insecurity, diminished confidence and motivation, and depression--all of which can lead to toxicity and misconduct. So, in this unprecedented moment, we must resist the temptation to gossip, harass, or undercut others in an attempt to make ourselves feel better, and recognize that such behaviors amount to symptoms for which we should seek the support of one or more trusted adults.

I encourage us all to take some time over the next few days to consider our School's values, and to align our daily practices with those values both inside and outside of our virtual spaces. Many of you have reported to me that you didn't fully appreciate what you have here at Stevenson until it was temporarily taken from you by our need to depart campus. Your teachers, and you and your peers, are all working hard to keep the best part of our

School alive, albeit in a different form. Good citizenship is at the center of what makes us special, so let's commit to doing all we can to contribute to this endeavor in a positive way no matter where we are in this world. Please know, I am certain the vast majority of our community is already behaving with great responsibility and integrity.

Respectfully,

Mr. Olson
Dean of Students for the Upper Division