

March 27, 2020

Dear Middle School Families,

I hope this finds you all safe, healthy, and staying strong as you navigate these very new waters. This was not what we all expected, but my belief is that we will tackle this challenge as a school community and succeed in doing so.

Before getting into the logistics and protocol of online learning, it is important that we all acknowledge that the learning experiences will be different than in a regular classroom setting. There will be fewer meetings, and meetings will be shorter at times; there will be a few schedule shifts; some classes will meet jointly. However, students will develop a greater sense of independence in their preparation and work completion, and assignments and assessments will be designed to support this. It is a different learning environment, but one that still has great opportunity for providing rich, rigorous learning experiences. That is our goal and vision.

So, now we dive in! There is much to read here. Please consider printing this email for future reference.

The Basics

- **Online classes will begin on Monday, March 30th. We will follow a school day schedule from 8:15am - 3:10pm.** Keep in mind, students will not be in class the entire day, as we do have abbreviated meeting schedules. Our live meetings will take place via **Zoom**; all students should have this downloaded and set up on their Chromebooks. If not, please reach out ASAP.
- **Our online schedule will, for the most part, follow the students' already established schedule.** Classes will meet anywhere from 1-4 times per week at the specified times. Due to a few extenuating circumstances, a few changes had to be made, but those teachers will make this clear to both you and students.
- **By noon today, each MS Faculty member will post to their PSL page.** It will include meeting days and times, as well as a live link to that teacher's Zoom Classroom. I will be sending students a doc to help them keep track of their teachers' links. This will stay posted there throughout our online learning. Art teachers have a different plan in place and will be reaching out to students via email. You may also be receiving emails from teachers with New Course Expectations (also posted on PSL)
- **Students should be dressed as they would for a regular Dress Down Day.** We will not require uniforms, but they should follow protocol and be dressed appropriately.
- **Students should have a quiet, private, well lit environment to work.** We ask that only the student be involved in classes, and to help this, each student should conduct their learning while wearing **headphones**. This will help cancel out background noise and allow for greater privacy for others in the home.
- **Attendance** will be taken at the start of each class and reported to Ms. King. If your child is sick, please still send Ms. King an email and let her know. We will notify teachers.

However, if you are experiencing technical difficulties and your child cannot connect, simply email the teachers and let them know. We will help problem solve and get them caught up. Of course, we will notify you of an unexplained absences.

- **We are still available to you for communication. Email will be a critical part of this.** Please check your own email, and encourage your children to do so, twice a day. If you want to speak with a teacher, please request that. The same is true for administration. We can still receive voicemails from work phones via emails, so that is an option as well.
- **We will still observe planned school holidays.** We will not meet for classes on weekends or on the days set aside for Passover, Good Friday, and Easter Monday (April 9, 10, 13).
- **Homework will still be posted weekly on PSL.** Teachers will also include “prep” for the next class. Grades will also continue to be updated. We realize PSL is having technological difficulties at times. Should that occur, teachers will provide what is needed through email and shared Google Drive folders. They are prepared to do that.
- **Advisors will meet with students.** Advisors will hold a short advisory meeting every Thursday from 9:45-9:55 to do a quick check-in with students. Additional meeting times can be set up as needed. Advisors will also be reaching out today via email to provide a copy of the students’ regular schedule that they can highlight with class times, as well as a blank schedule should they want to create new one.
- **We will not meet for Study Halls, Lunch, Advisory (other than TH), Assembly, or Activities periods.** However, I will be hosting grade level meetings with students after Week One of online learning. If a class is scheduled during a regular lunch period, and a few are, students are welcome to have lunch during class if it’s not too distracting for them. A few academic classes may also be scheduled during those periods.

How Can You Help Your Child Be Prepared?

- **Have them check their email and PSL pages often, starting today.** Students should manage their own school email and PSL accounts, but they will need reminders to check.
- **Have your child highlight their schedule or fill in the blank schedule I sent to each of them as they receive teachers’ meeting schedules.**
- **Start having students wake up earlier each day.** We know that adolescents love (and need!) to sleep. But, school starts on Monday, and they need to be prepared to start the day at 8:15am should they have a 1st period class.
- **Have them start gathering their materials and setting up their work space.** They will need paper, a writing utensil, textbook/workbook/novel (as appropriate), and any printed documents a teacher has provided to start class. This should not wait until the last minute. Please be in touch immediately if your child is missing any texts, workbooks, or class novels.
- **Check to make sure you have the necessary technology at home.** Students need access to Wifi, a working printer, and either their Chromebook, desktop, another laptop, or an iPad/tablet with Zoom downloaded and set up. Students should not use their

phones for class sessions. If you are missing any of these, please be in touch as soon as possible, so we can help problem solve.

- **Consider having your child (or yourself) download an app for scanning documents.** In some subjects, students will have to scan documents or workbook pages and email or submit on PSL. I've heard that **Tiny Scanner** does this easily, but other scanning apps are available.

I have no doubt you have questions. Please feel free to reach out. We know there will be challenges we have to face along the way, and open communication will be our best way to identify those and confront them. We do ask for your patience as we implement this. Our faculty has been working tirelessly over the break to be prepared for this, and their commitment to their students has been inspiring.

Take care of yourselves. Stay well.

Lori Kennedy
Director, Middle School

Guillermo Salgado
Assistant Director, Middle School