



March 28, 2020

Dear Lower School Families,

While we were hopeful that we would return to the physical Lower School at the end of Spring Break, it is clear now that this will not be the case for some time to come. With that in mind, we are excited to re-open Virtual Haverford on Monday, March 30th! **Please read this letter in its entirety, as well as the linked documents. It contains important information with regard to schedules and expectations moving forward.**

One of the cornerstones of the Haverford Community is the value that we place on the relationships between the boys and the teachers. Over the first few days of Virtual Haverford, as well as over Spring Break, it was apparent how critically important it is for those relationships to be maintained in the virtual school space. Additionally, it is clear how much the boys miss each other and how thrilled they are to spend time with each other in their virtual classrooms. We know that the consistency and structure we can provide the boys through facilitating a school day during this uncertain time, the more “normal” this will all feel for them. Finally, we also know how eager the boys are to continue their learning, and we are committed to utilizing instructional methods and tools that are conducive to teaching and learning in the virtual school space in order to continue to teach the boys.

With this in mind, the Lower School Faculty spent much of Spring Break reflecting on lessons learned during our first few days of virtual school, as well as on feedback from parents and students. We did additional research and professional development on best practices in virtual school models of instruction for elementary aged children, and worked through how to best deliver instruction in a virtual classroom.

Over Spring Break, the Lower School teachers learned how to shift their instruction to follow a “micro-learning” model. In short, this model helps to chunk instruction into smaller, manageable “bites” that are conducive to a virtual school model. Following break, you will see that core classroom instruction shifts to a balance of both synchronous (live) and asynchronous instruction. It will begin to follow a predictable routine of the students watching their teacher introduce a pre-recorded lesson, followed by synchronous (live) small group instruction, followed by the student completing and submitting independent practice of that skill or concept. **It is very important that students continue to complete independent work with minimal adult support (as age appropriate).** In 1st Grade and above there are opportunities for students to check in with teachers if they have questions on independent work. The completion and submission of independent work will allow the teachers to see what the boys are and are not understanding so that future instruction can be differentiated to meet their needs. Although

next week is the beginning of April, in many regards the next week of instruction will look a lot like September, as teachers focus on teaching the boys new routines and expectations for learning in a virtual classroom. Please remember that neither your son, nor his teacher, have experienced teaching or learning in this model at length before. We will continue to adjust our model as we learn what is and is not working in the virtual classroom. Please approach the next week or so with patience, and continue to reach out to your son's classroom teacher and myself with feedback.

There are many aspects of the schedule that remain the same as before break, such as daily Morning Meeting/Advisory, virtual check-ins, placing academics in the 8:30am-12:00pm time frame, and providing Specials activities in the afternoon. We have also made several changes to the schedule including: creating a more predictable schedule for the day, increasing the amount of synchronous class time across the week, creating opportunities to break the boys into smaller groups for instructional time, and integrating synchronous time with many of the Specials teachers. We continue to work through future additions to the virtual Lower School program, including the possibility of more small group instruction, student support, and additional community and student life opportunities.

The Lower School division faces some unique challenges as we proceed forward with virtual school. What the boys are capable of completing independently, the length of their attention spans, and what we can expect of them in a virtual classroom varies greatly by grade level. In most virtual elementary school models (of which there are unsurprisingly very few), the students work independently and with a home learning coach/parent for much of their instruction. We recognize that parents are managing a lot at home right now, and with the changes to the instructional model and schedule post Spring Break, we are trying our best to alleviate parents from being a full time homeschool teacher. However, it is important to acknowledge that, especially in the younger grades, there are aspects of the instruction where the boys will require your support. We are here to support you in any way we can, so please reach out to us, we are all in this together!

**When viewing the grade level schedules, synchronous (“live”) meeting times are indicated by blue highlighting.** I highly recommend printing your son's schedule if you are able and hanging it in his work space. You and your son will receive a daily notice (via SeeSaw/Canvas and email) that outlines the day's work, reminds them of when they should join the virtual classroom, and provides instructions and links for independent tasks. Please look for additional communication from your son's teacher. You can view the updated schedules and additional important information about the Virtual Lower School on the [LS Continuity of Learning Webpage](#). **It is very important that you take the time to read the document that accompanies the schedules. It contains additional information that will clarify the schedule and expectations.** Schedules for grade levels can be found on the pages indicated below:

- Pre-kindergarten: Page 6
- Kindergarten: Page 7

- 1st Grade: Page 8
- 2nd Grade: Page 9
- 3rd Grade: Page 10
- 4th Grade: Page 11
- 5th Grade: Page 12-14

As Haverford continues to navigate this challenging and unpredictable time, we must continue to lean on the strengths of our community. We want to make sure that all of our students and staff are being treated with respect and dignity at this time and always. Everyone is navigating a new framework, structure and pedagogical approach to teaching and learning. Now, almost more than ever, is a time to treat each other kindly, with compassion and understanding, and to uphold our shared Principles of Community. What we say to one another now, and in the coming days, as well as how we say it matters. We have the opportunity to model for the boys how to be flexible and navigate stressful and disorienting times with grace, patience and understanding, and by continuing to pull together as a community. These are lessons that will last far beyond our dealings with COVID-19.

As a final note, I want to say thank you again for the multitude of notes and voicemails I have received praising the Lower School faculty for the work they have done (and will continue to do). Your words are meaningful and motivating. I am proud and honored to work with such dedicated and amazing teachers. We miss your boys tremendously and look forward with great anticipation to the day when we see them on campus again.

Be well and please stay in touch.

Warmly,  
Dr. Pam Greenblatt