

Dear Lower School Families,

I hope this letter finds you doing well. It is hard to believe that nearly eight months ago we made our first transition to Virtual Haverford. Although disappointed that we are returning to virtual learning, we are all incredibly grateful for the opportunity to have had boys learning on campus since September and optimistic that this will be a far shorter closure than last spring. Over the course of the past eleven weeks the teachers have not only had the opportunity to build relationships with the boys, but also to practice routines and skills that will help your son to transition back into virtual learning.

As opposed to last spring, the teachers have had more time to prepare themselves and the boys for this transition. Additionally, as a School, we have had the opportunity to reflect on feedback from Virtual Haverford and to engage in additional professional learning related to best practice for elementary aged students in virtual learning environments. This has afforded us the opportunity this fall, whether boys were in the physical classroom or hybrid Haverford, to model and instruct the boys on skills and tools they will need to understand and use in the virtual environment. This has included both basic tasks such as practicing logging into Google Chrome, Canvas and accessing many of the online tools they will need for virtual learning, all the way through running simulations of participating in a virtual class.

As we transition into virtual learning, many of the routines the boys have grown accustomed to will follow them into the virtual classroom. This includes the expectation that the boys are in uniform and on time for each class. The schedule of classes the boys have grown accustomed to over the past eleven weeks will remain the same. Similar to the spring, as we move into the virtual learning environment, learning will be facilitated through both synchronous and asynchronous instruction as outlined on their class schedule. The balance of synchronous and asynchronous learning continues to be emphasized by experts in the field of virtual/remote learning. We also learned in the spring about the realities of screen fatigue. With that in mind, the teachers have worked tirelessly to upload lessons and materials into our learning management system, Canvas, which will be the vehicle through which students engage in both synchronous and asynchronous learning. Through Canvas, they access classroom materials, find the Google Meet links to access the virtual classroom, and to submit their work. Specials are also utilizing Canvas as a means of providing the boys with lessons/activities and links to the virtual classroom.

As a reminder, synchronous (“live”) times are when the boys are logging into a Google Meet to join the virtual classroom, while asynchronous times involve engaging with pre-recorded lessons, videos, reading materials and/or independent activities/tasks. In Canvas, and on your son’s schedule, the asynchronous times are noted as “I Do” and “You Do”, while the synchronous times are marked as “We Do” and yellow highlighting. It is expected that boys complete “I Do” tasks on their own before joining the synchronous “We Do” class time (indicated by yellow highlighting), after which they will complete “You Do” activities/tasks. There are a few classes in which there is no “I Do” portion, and the boys will head straight to the “We Do”

(synchronous) virtual classroom. For fully asynchronous classes, the boys will independently complete “I Do” and “You Do” tasks. We have created a brief overview of how Canvas will be both utilized and accessed by your son, which can be found here for [PK- 4th grade](#) (5th grade has been using Canvas daily this year in the classroom, if your 5th grade son is having difficulty accessing his Canvas classes please email his Advisor for assistance). A visual checklist for Canvas is also attached to this email, I would recommend printing the one for your son’s grade level and keeping it on hand for Monday. Additional videos related to using Canvas can be found on the [Canvas PK-5 webpage](#). Your son’s classroom teacher will be providing you with information and resources for accessing and using Canvas with more specifics related to their grade level/classroom. We have learned that Canvas functions better on a PC or Mac, as opposed to an iPad. If you would like to borrow a Chromebook from the School for your son to use during Virtual Haverford, please complete this [Chromebook Loaner Form](#).

Although both the teachers and boys are more prepared to transition in Virtual Haverford, this shift represents a change for everyone. While we anticipate the transition to be smoother than in the spring, we also expect that there will be challenges the first few days as the boys adapt to their new learning environment while adjusting to different expectations. 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 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. With all that being said, the first few days of virtual instruction are going to be focused on helping the boys adapt to new routines and expectations while also assuring the boys are getting online, can access Canvas modules and lessons, and are feeling confident in their ability to learn virtually.

We remain optimistic that our return to Virtual Haverford will be short lived, but nonetheless, we are here to support you in any way we can, so please reach out to us, we are all in this together!

**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.**

**When viewing the grade level schedules, synchronous (“live”) meeting times are indicated by yellow 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 Canvas notifications, posted to the Canvas homepage and/or by email) that outlines the materials your son will need for the day, indicates which module/lesson to navigate to in each class, and provides instructions and links for independent tasks. Please look for additional communication from your son’s teacher. You can view the classroom/travel group schedules and additional

important information about the Virtual Lower School on the [LS Continuity of Learning Webpage](#), additional information can also be found on the [Virtual Haverford Resource Page](#). Be sure to find your sons' homeroom teacher or correct Travel Group (5th Grade) when viewing/printing the schedules.

**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, Canvas and expectations.**

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. 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.

Be well and please stay in touch.

Warmly,

Dr. Pam Greenblatt