Monday, March 9, 2020

Remote Learning Update

Dear Athenian Parents:

As you know we have made significant changes to our schedule and program in response to the evolving news regarding COVID-19. You also know that Athenian has no confirmed cases in or connected to our community. That said, we are preparing for the possibility that we will have to close school and teach classes remotely using technology. (You may have seen that Stanford has already moved to a remote-learning model.) We will spend the latter part of this week getting teachers prepared for this possibility.

We have many resources that are already in place to make the transition to distance learning as seamless as possible:

1. BYOD Program - All students have a device that can be used for coursework no matter where learning may take place.
2. Canvas - Athenian students have access to a robust learning management system (LMS) to connect them with curricular resources and foster engagement with their classmates outside of a brick-and-mortar classroom.
3. Digital Library Resources - Our Library provides students access to a multitude of databases that can be accessed online.
4. G Suite & Office 365 - All students have accounts with two robust productivity platforms that can allow them to receive feedback from their teachers and work collaboratively with their peers in real time.

In addition, seven years ago Athenian helped found the Bay Area Blended Learning Consortium (BlendEd) in order to teach ourselves and our students about learning online. Many of our students have taken advantage of the opportunity to take online courses offered through BlendEd.

Our four original partner schools (now six) made the important decision to create our own online curricula from scratch rather than purchasing courses created by others. That decision will pay rich dividends if/when we need to move to broader online learning, as we have a core group of teachers who have been mastering online learning over these seven years. Our Director of Teaching and Learning, Kalyan Balaven, is one of those pioneering teachers who taught in that first BlendEd cohort.

This week we formed a task force to lead our online-learning efforts. It is led by Louis Tullo, Director of Educational Technology, and Kalyan Balaven. They are joined by those BlendEd teachers and other faculty tech leaders. They will work with colleagues next week to get their courses ready to teach online should the need arise. There will be bumps in the road, but we will be ready to continue Athenian’s education should the need arise.

Thank you all for your many thoughtful notes of encouragement this last week. We are a strong community that will move through this with grace. We will continue to approach these days with calm and care. Please be well.

Sincerely,

Eric F. Niles