MESSAGE FROM ERIC NILES

Monday, March 30, 2020

Dear Athenian Parents,

The past few weeks have brought with them a whirlwind of change, and our community has handled it with grace. As we enter our third week in the virtual classroom, we are streamlining our processes and revisiting policies that are more relevant than ever with all classes offered online.

In preparation for online/distance learning after spring break, we’ve shored up our privacy measures -- a concern for many as we rely more than ever on technology. Please know that we’ve consulted with experts, both within and outside our community, to develop an approach that has the students’ best interests in mind. We want to safeguard our students' privacy while ensuring the best possible distance/online learning opportunities for all, regardless of timezone or other possible obstacles related to learning from home.

I encourage you to read this communication in its entirety, as it is important that you understand how we are using Zoom in particular. In addition, I want to remind all families that we will continue to abide by the photo release permissions/opt-outs given during the registration process for any public communications.
OUR PRIVACY COMMITMENT:

In order to support the best schedule and learning opportunities for our students, beginning April 13, 2020, faculty may choose to make video and/or audio recordings of our online lessons and meetings. The primary reasons for doing this are to enable participation of international students who have returned to their home countries and students who are sick and/or cannot participate in a live Zoom session. All virtual meetings will be held solely on the Zoom platform. Meeting recordings may be stored in Zoom, Microsoft One Drive, or Google Drive, all of which are compliant with both federal (FERPA) and state laws (COPPA) regarding student data privacy.

This means that while your child is in a Zoom meeting with their class, they may be recorded if they share their video and audio in that class session. Faculty are the only ones who can record these class meetings and will notify students before they record any class content. Faculty will only record necessary or relevant material. These recordings may include personal information about your child, as well as other members of your household and your home if they are in view of your child’s webcam or listening range of their microphone. The recorded information will only be shared internally with members of the Athenian community, including classmates, faculty, and staff who may need access to our learning materials for various purposes, including implementing our online platform. In addition, any virtual communication, including lessons and meetings, may be monitored by the Athenian School at any time. As we extend our learning environment into the virtual world, we would also like to take a moment to remind our families that the School’s conduct expectations as to students, parents, and faculty apply equally to our distance learning platforms.

As a further measure to ensure tight control of access to these systems and student data, accounts are set up to use our single-sign-on system, which ensures the
Athenian Technology Department possesses the sole ability to provision accounts for members of our community, revoke access if needed, and monitor activity on these platforms. Athenian employees are also bound by an acceptable use policy that ensures any educational data collected for students is not shared beyond members of our community who require access to it to educate our students.

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Though this communication was prompted by our recent transition to distance/online learning, please know that we have always taken data security and privacy very seriously and are constantly improving our practices and controls as the digital landscape is constantly changing.

If anyone has any questions about the information provided here, I invite you to reach out to me (eniles@athenian.org) or Louis Tullo, Director of Educational Technology, (ltullo@athenian.org) to discuss. My (virtual) door is always open. As always, we are grateful for your partnership and support as we continue to build and foster our community during these challenging times.

Sincerely,

Eric F. Niles
Head of School