Dear Middle School Families,

Thank you for your many messages of support this week. As we head into the weekend, I wanted to send out more specific information about our plan for distance learning which we will be starting on Monday, March 16th.

What is distance learning?
- **Distance learning** is leveraging technology to teach classes that are not necessarily designed to be taught online.
- **Online classes** are planned and prepared specifically to be delivered online. This type of class is often **asynchronous**, meaning that students who are registered for the class have flexibility around when they complete different assignments.
- At Athenian, we were quickly able to pivot to **distance learning using Canvas**, our learning management system, but we have not created asynchronous online classes.
- **Athenian’s distance learning classes will be synchronous** in order to allow our students to interact with their teachers on a daily basis and to create a sense of structure to the school day.

When will my child be engaged in distance learning?
- **Distance learning will begin on Monday, March 16th and will continue until spring break, which begins on Wednesday, April 1.** Our hope is that we can return to campus on April 13, after spring break.
- **In order to create a consistent and structured learning environment, we will follow the regular daily schedule while we are in a distance learning mode.** Students should virtually attend their classes from 8:10-3:35 each day, Monday-Thursday. Students will not attend advisory, electives, or conference and collaboration. Advisors will touch base with their advisees each week, however, and some may opt to meet with the entire group during the scheduled advisory time once we are up and running.
- **Students will not attend virtual Focus Days on Friday.** Pivoting to distance learning has been a massive undertaking for our faculty, and we have not had enough time to develop meaningful Focus Day experiences online. Students can use the time Friday to complete homework for the week or simply take advantage of unscheduled time during the day.

What platform will my child use for distance learning?
- **At the beginning of each class period, students will log into that class on Canvas.** All teachers have designed new homepages with clear agendas for each class period. We are creating an experience entirely within Canvas so that our students do not need to toggle between different apps and programs.
- **Teachers will be present, virtually, for the entire class period.** Students will begin class using the chat mechanism in Canvas so that teachers can take attendance. Teachers will be able to answer questions via the Canvas inbox, and will close each class with a brief check-out discussion prompt.
- **Distance Learning Instruction will vary by class and teacher.** Some teachers will provide reading and discussion during the hour while others may show videos or ask students to participate via Zoom video conference. Our hope is to balance a consistent structure with a varied experience in each class.
How can I support your child’s learning?

- **Make sure that you have accessible broadband internet access where your child will be working.** If this is not accessible in your home or the space where your child will be working, please reach out to me.

- **Help your child create a space for learning.** This should not be a bed, but a clearly articulated working station such as a desk or part of a table that becomes a designated learning space.

- **Make sure that the only device your child is using is their iPad.** Students should not have their phones or other devices with them while they attend school.

Thank you in advance for your understanding, patience, and flexibility as we make this transition. Our faculty are working very hard to make sure they have everything set for Monday’s classes. We are all doing our best to make this shift as smooth as possible, but there will certainly be bumps in the road. Please help your child keep their perspective when difficult moments navigating this system arise. Maintaining a routine and connection to teachers and peers is just as important, at this time, as learning new content.

Stay safe, stay healthy, and know that we are here to support you during this challenging time.

Lauren

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