March 13, 2020

Dear Families,

Thank you for all of your messages of support. 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 empower faculty to teach students when in-person meetings aren’t possible. This is different from **online classes**, which are planned and prepared specifically to be delivered online with flexibility around when students can attend class and complete their 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. Please advise your student to look for an email from Louis Tullo, Director of Educational Technology, later this evening.
- **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. Please note that our faculty is also trained for some asynchronous learning should we have to use it at some point in the future.

When will my child be engaged in distance learning?

- **We will start distance learning on Monday, March 16th and plan to continue until spring break.** We will follow up once it is determined if we will continue distance learning after spring break.
- **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-Friday.** We have teachers who work in both the Middle School and Upper School and this will provide the most seamless transition for all involved.
- **Students will virtually attend advisory on Wednesdays.** We will not offer electives, morning meetings, or C&C during the month of March. Additionally, 9th Grade Health and Computational Thinking classes will not be offered during the month of March.

What platform will my child use for distance learning?

- **At the beginning of each class period, students will log into that class on Canvas.** This is how teachers will take attendance.
- **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. Students 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 problem sets, reading, and discussion during the hour while others may show videos or ask students to participate via a Zoom video conference. Our hope is to balance a consistent structure with varied experience in each class.
How can I support my child’s learning?

- **Make sure that you have accessible broadband internet access** where your child will be working.
- **Help your child create a space for learning.** This should not be a bed, but a desk or part of a table that becomes a designated learning space.

Thank you in advance for your understanding, patience, and flexibility as we make this transition. Our faculty is working very hard to make sure they have everything set for Monday’s classes. Know that we are all doing our best to make this shift as smooth as possible. Stay safe, stay healthy, and know that we are here to support you during this challenging time.

Sincerely,

Amy

**Amy Wintermeyer, Head of Upper School**

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