April 1, 2020

Dear US Families,

I wanted to update you on our distance learning plans for the fourth quarter when we resume classes on April 13th. As I mentioned in yesterday’s email about midterm grades, I’m very proud of our community’s ability to pivot on such short notice and begin distance learning on March 16th. That said, in that process we learned that following our traditional daily schedule is not sustainable in the long run when we add in the homework and additional work required to move forward with our fourth quarter curriculum.

In looking for a solution, we consulted with many of our peer schools and also looked at what is considered best practice for a distance learning model. We created several model schedules and then sought feedback from faculty and our Town Meeting student leaders. Please see the attached PDF of the schedule we selected. I explain the schedule HERE in a video recording and highly recommend that you listen to better understand the specifics of the changes.

Here are the high-level key points:

- We wanted to balance synchronous class periods where students could find connection with their peers and teachers with asynchronous work done outside of class.
- We wanted to limit required screen time for our students, given that they were going to have assigned homework outside of the schedule.
- We wanted to offer flexibility so that students could have some choice in how and when they do their asynchronous work.
- We wanted to make sure we had scheduled time for students to meet with their peers and teachers and seek extra help.
- We built time into the schedule to meaningfully assess student work. With the exception of projects and papers that students have been working towards all year, fourth quarter assessments will be focused on the units they are covering this semester. We will not have final exams this semester.

Lastly, I wanted to include one important clarification from yesterday’s email regarding how we are handling second semester grading:

- Any material that students submitted at the end of the third quarter that was not factored into the midterm grade will be graded and added to the third quarter grade. Teachers will send an updated grade to families through a progress report.

Please let me know if you have any questions as we prepare to make this transition on April 13th. Thank you again for your words of encouragement and support these past few weeks. Please stay safe and healthy!

Best,
Amy

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