March 20, 2020

Dear Middle School Families,

As we wrap up our first week of distance learning, I want to thank you for all of your support and the many, many kind emails that we have received. Our teachers have been working very hard to create a sense of structure and normalcy for our students, and they have been heartened seeing their faces and hearing their laughter on Zoom calls.

Heading into week two of distance learning, we hope that you will take a few minutes to have your student fill out this brief survey to provide us feedback about how the program is going.

Next week’s schedule will once again follow a regular Monday -Thursday schedule. The following week (March 30-31) is only a two day week in the Middle School; spring break begins on Wednesday, April 1. Each class will meet once over the course of the two days, and the days will end at 2:00 PM. I will send out a detailed class meeting schedule for those dates towards the end of next week.

In the event that we must continue distance learning after spring break, we will make adjustments to the daily and weekly schedule. We are especially mindful of balancing screentime and workload.

Please note a few important reminders. Distance learning requires a strong and consistent partnership between home and school, and we really appreciate your support.

- Class meetings online should be treated with appropriate seriousness. Whether in chat or on camera, students are expected to have an academic mindset, just as they would during in-person instruction. Students are expected to arrive on time and be present for all class activities.
- Students should get up, get dressed and have breakfast before the first class so that they can be fully present.
- Students should work in a place where they can be productive, free from distractions. Students should sit at a table or desk rather than a couch or bed. Phones or other devices should not be in the workspace. Some students may need supervision or gentle reminders to stay on task - for this reason, setting up in a common space, rather than a bedroom, can be helpful.
- During Zoom discussions, students should keep their video on and should be seen on camera (unless given permission by a teacher to turn it off). Students may select appropriate background settings, but they should not change them during class. All students should keep their microphones muted until prompted by teachers to contribute to discussions.
- Students should take advantage of the breaks and longer lunch to get off of technology entirely, and perhaps even go outside.
Since distance learning calls on students to be more proactive, students should get into the habit of reading all posted assignments and due dates carefully.

Thanks for your support, and take good care,
Lauren

Lauren Railey
Middle School Head, The Athenian School
50 years of intellectual exploration and meaningful contribution