



Dear Parents,

I hope you are well, and that you are taking care of your friends and family. Thank you very much for the support and kindness you have shown toward our greater Community family over the past few days; please know that we all appreciate it very much. Last night teachers had a virtual happy hour over Zoom, and it was great fun to reconnect. It's hard to believe that we are only a week into our usual spring break!

Next Monday we will begin our distance learning program. As you are probably aware, St. Louis County has issued a stay-at-home order beginning tonight and lasting through April 22. This restricts residents to their homes for all but essential services such as groceries and health care. We will follow this order, and plan to continue our distance teaching until the County lifts it. This means, unfortunately, that any school events scheduled to occur during that time (such as the Circle of Learning speaker) have been canceled. It is our hope that we will be allowed to return to school after April 22; however, we have begun exploring alternate ways to hold our May events at a distance just in case we are not.

For those of you with children in the Upper Division, we are adapting the already-existing Google Classroom homework page. You (and your children!) will see assignments, videos, and

other teaching where previously you were able to access homework assignments. Upper Division students and parents should already be used to this system, but if you have any questions please email homeroom teachers or advisors. Later this week Lower Division parents will receive email invitations from Kathy Fitzgerald for each child to join homeroom Google Classrooms later this week. **Be on the lookout for those emails--if Lower Division parents do not receive one by Thursday, March 26 at 5:00 p.m.** please email Kathy Fitzgerald at [kfitzgerald@communityschool.com](mailto:kfitzgerald@communityschool.com). That email will include complete instructions for our Lower Division families.

Below you will find a list of resources, including who to contact if you have questions regarding any aspect of distance learning.

I want to especially thank teachers and division directors for their hard work over the past few weeks. It is a herculean task to create an entire distance learning program on the fly, and from scratch, and I am deeply appreciative of the time and effort Kathy, Lynn, and all of our teachers have put in during what was intended to be their spring break. We are hoping for as smooth a start as possible, but I would remind everyone that it is unlikely we will be perfect. Parents, children, and teachers are all beginners at this effort; we're all in it together, and we will figure it out!

**Tips for Parents:** I do have a few tips for parents and caregivers who are about to embark on this effort. These are lessons learned from my time as a teacher and administrator in a laptop program, and more importantly, from lessons learned by teachers in China who made the sudden shift to online a few months ago.

- Do not attempt to recreate seven hours a day of learning for students. The goal should be to keep your children's minds active. We have set goals for the amount of time children will be putting into their school work on a daily basis (these amounts all **include** the traditionally assigned minutes of reading each day and all subjects, including specials):
  - Nursery/JK=1 hour
  - SK-1st=1.5 hours
  - 2nd=2 hours
  - 3rd=2.5 hours

- 4th-6th=3 hours
- Create a work space for children to do school work. It should not be in their rooms if at all possible. Children will enjoy helping to set this area up, so make it something fun for them to participate in.
- Create a schedule. Children thrive with routine, and knowing that “school” will happen at a specific time will help immensely. We recommend you also schedule media time, outdoor time, family time, etc. You are the best judge of what this should look like.
- Never allow children to have unsupervised internet access, especially in the privacy of their bedrooms.
- Don’t fight with your children over school work. They will remember this time their entire lives, and the more you can make it positive, the better.
- Don’t worry too much about “lost” education. Every child in American--frankly, in the world--is experiencing a similar situation. We will help our students catch up next fall, as I am sure every school will do.

**Resources:**

- For questions about school work in a specific class, please email teachers directly. Each teacher is setting up “office hours” each day, but we realize schedules will not always allow for synchronous discussion. Email will likely be the best means of communication (remember, many teachers are simultaneously home schooling their own children); emails will be returned within 24 hours
- Questions about technology should be directed to Joe Korfmacher ([jkorfmacher@communityschool.com](mailto:jkorfmacher@communityschool.com)) or Jen Gosnell ([jgosnell@communityschool.com](mailto:jgosnell@communityschool.com))
- If you are unsure who you should reach out to, any of you can email me at [rcooke@communityschool.com](mailto:rcooke@communityschool.com). Parents with children in N-2 can email Kathy Fitzgerald at [kfitzgerald@communityschool.com](mailto:kfitzgerald@communityschool.com), and parents with 3rd-6th graders can email Lynn Christopher at [lchristopher@communityschool.com](mailto:lchristopher@communityschool.com)
- Our school counselor, Taylor Mata, will be accessible for advice and guidance at [tmata@communityschool.com](mailto:tmata@communityschool.com)

One of the more difficult aspects to this crisis is the uncertainty. We don’t know what issues will come our way next month, but as my mother says, “don’t borrow trouble from tomorrow.” We are prepared for this significant interruption in our routine, and remain hopeful for a resolution

sooner rather than later. But know that we will do our best for you as always; we care deeply about your children, and understand the difficulties families are facing. Please let us know if there is anything we can do at any time.

Stay well,

Bob