

March 6, 2020

Dear Explorer West Families,

The big question out there in the Seattle area right now, for everyone, is whether, or when, schools will close. I'm sure that you have heard that one district (Northshore), and several individual public and independent schools, have already closed. Different schools and districts have different circumstances and rationales for making their decisions, but at this time, **we are still planning to be open on Monday, and to remain open as long as King County Public Health advises us it is safe to do so.** There have been no changes in the status of our students and staff, including the group that traveled to Rome, and we have no reason to believe that any of our community members have been affected by COVID-19. Our teachers and admin staff are all clear to return on Monday, and we look forward to being reunited with our 8th graders.

This is, however, a rapidly changing scenario, and we *all* need to be prepared for the possibility of school closure. And, it is certainly possible that guidance from the health department will change as soon as this weekend. So, we are doing everything we can to be prepared, should we need to close school as early as Monday, including setting up the framework for remote learning.

Some of the steps we've already taken to prepare are:

- Setting each student and class up with Google Classroom, the digital platform we will rely on;
- Familiarizing students and teachers with Google Meet for video classes;
- Making sure each student has access to a computer and internet (if you haven't heard from us and your student does *not* have access to either, please let me know ASAP!);
- Sending students home today with all their books and materials, *in case they are needed at home on Monday.*

Eighth graders were not here today to do that together with teachers, but we know they will be able to adapt quickly should they need to.

If we do need to close, here's what to expect:

- The first day of school closure would be a day for further planning and training for faculty. *Students would be asked to check their email at 9am to find out what teachers' expectations are for them for the day, and can expect to be told to continue working on familiar assignments or projects.*
- Beginning on the second day, students should expect to follow a modified schedule that we will provide, for most of a typical school day.

- Classes would happen both synchronously (with all students logging on with their teacher at the same time via Google Meet), as well as asynchronously (with teachers posting instructional videos, links, and assignments into Google Classroom that students do on their own).
- We will provide more details and information about remote learning if school closure happens, toward the end of the first day.

Some things you can do at home to prepare:

- Make sure your student has a dedicated work space in the home.
- Make sure your student can log in to their school account from their home computer, and let us know if they have trouble.
- Talk about how you'll minimize distractions while working online, and how to be a good community member and digital citizen.

Most importantly, please continue to take good care of yourselves and each other. As difficult as it is to manage this ever-changing situation, I am struck by the ways in which it brings us together. I am incredibly grateful for the support we have received from all of you during this confusing and difficult time. The 6th and 7th graders are feeling the tension -- we have seen increased signs of stress which, as you all know, can manifest in less than ideal behavior. We are holding our standards while also trying to extend compassion, as they have been asked to hold a lot of uncertainty. At the same time, we are seeing many many acts of kindness and comfort, flexibility and grace, and we are celebrating that.

So, I can only advise you all to try your best to answer their questions, practice kindness and notice theirs, stay flexible, express gratitude, keep smiling, and spend time outside this weekend!

I very much hope to see everyone on Monday.

Warmly,
Barbara

PS I know it has been difficult to track the different streams of communication. We now have a [page on our website](#) to archive all school-wide announcements related to COVID-19. In the event of an extended school closure, we will also use this page for family resources to support remote learning. I encourage you to bookmark this page!