

March 12, 2020

Dear Explorer West Community, including the students!

I am sure you have all seen the news by now that Governor Inslee has ordered **all public and private schools in King County to close through April 24**. You can read more about it [here](#). Looks like we are in it for the long haul.

Our faculty spent the day continuing to prepare and plan for remote learning. Like all of you, they did their work today while also absorbing the news of this extended disruption to all aspects of our lives. While feeling hopeful that these stark measures will make a meaningful difference in slowing the spread of COVID-19, they shared new fears and disappointments that came with the news, and concerns for themselves and their loved ones. And they worried about our students and families, and how all of you would be impacted by this extended closure. In the coming days and weeks, it will be important for us to find ways to support each other and I know our community will rise to that challenge. I encourage you to reach out to one another, even to folks in our community you may not know very well. I have already received messages from families eager to help with tech resources or in-a-pinch childcare. Please let me know how our community can support you, or if you have ideas about ways to help, or ways to bring families together (well, figuratively).

Monday will be the official start of our Remote Learning program. As you know, teachers at Explorer West value face-to-face communication and direct experience; this has never been an environment where students (or teachers) spend a lot of time in front of screens. Making this transition is hard for us! Yet I was so impressed by the creativity and growth mindset that our teachers brought to the task of learning new ways to extend their connection with students from school to home. We are determined to make the most of this situation. It will *not* be the same, but it *will* be Explorer West.

Today we were able to finalize many of the structural pieces of the program. Tomorrow you will receive the Explorer West Remote Learning Guide, which provides nuts-and-bolts guidance for students and families about what to expect. Some key things to know:

- The major platforms we will use are Google Classroom and **Zoom** (not Google Meet, as previously shared -- teachers who have been trying both platforms with their students this week convinced the rest of us that Zoom is the way to go).
- Students (with parents cc'ed) will receive an email each morning by 8:15 with announcements and the day's schedule, including Zoom links for synchronous (live video) meetings.

- A typical day will consist of four classes, plus Advisory and Study Hall/SSR, and a healthy lunch break. Classes will start at 8:30 and will wrap up with a quick check-out form at 3pm.

More details tomorrow along with the Remote Learning Guide. We fully expect some bumps as we get started, both in terms of making the technology work for everyone, and learning new routines and norms. I'm hopeful that the students will appreciate seeing the teachers learn alongside them! We know how much we will be leaning on you, the families, for support in helping things go smoothly to whatever extent you are able to provide it, and we will be asking students and families for feedback toward the end of each week so we can keep re-tooling and improving.

Tomorrow (Friday, March 13) we are hosting some *optional* check-in times for students with faculty and staff, via Zoom. This is a good opportunity to make sure that Zoom is working on your home computer. If your student is available to try it out, here are the windows of time -- just follow the link at a time that works for you. Depending on your device you may be asked to download the Zoom app or Chrome extension, or you may be able to use the web app from your browser.

9:00 to 9:30 -- [Click here to check in with Tara](#)

9:30 to 10am -- [Click here to check in with Terra](#)

1pm to 1:30pm -- [Click here to check in with Virgil](#)

1:30 to 2pm -- [Click here to check in with Barbara](#)

Students: if you are *not* able to try this on Friday, not to worry, we will work it out on Monday.

Many, many thanks for your ongoing support and partnership,

Barbara