

April 10, 2020

Dear Lower School Families,

We have now completed two weeks of online learning. In talking with faculty, communicating with several parents and exchanging a few emails with students about their “Flag of the Week,” this week has been smoother in terms of technology working better, routines for working from home becoming established, and a sense of community in classes beginning to blossom in a format that is new for all of us.

Classroom Community

First, thank you for your feedback in the survey last week. It was very helpful and instructive. I hope you have noticed some positive changes as we moved from becoming comfortable with technology to making more connections with students. While all students have had individual opportunities with their homeroom teachers and many have had classroom meetings already, we will continue to have small-group and whole-class interactions. We will continue to increase these meetings while also recognizing that not all students are online at the same time and understanding that the best-laid plans can quickly devolve when glitches with technology and connection speed make it challenging to host these meetings. We recognize the power of our Academy community and will strive daily to make it come alive virtually. I appreciate that some also have concerns about the amount of screen time students suddenly have and found [this article](#) to be helpful.

Upcoming Special Holidays

Beginning this week and throughout April, many families in our community will celebrate significant holidays. Passover (April 8-16), Good Friday (April 10), Easter (April 12) and Ramadan (April 23-May24) mark some of the holiest times of the year in Judaism, Christianity, Catholicism and Islam. And Puthandu (April 14) marks the New Year for Tamil-speaking people from South Asia and is celebrated by many around the world, including families in our school community. For those who are celebrating, it will likely be very different during this time when people cannot gather with loved ones or at places of worship. We know this may be difficult for families and want to wish you the best as you celebrate however you are able this year. We’re all in this together, and we’re with you. [This article](#) offers valuable insight into celebrating holidays during this unique time. Our Lower School has a wonderful tradition of inviting families to come into classrooms and describe the various traditions they celebrate with these and other special holidays. We would like to continue that tradition by asking families to send photos or short videos (*15-30 seconds in Quicktime format, if possible*) to [Meera Sharma](#), our Interim Assistant Director of Diversity and Community Life. These photos and videos will be compiled into a special share at one of our upcoming lower school assemblies.

Spirit Week

Next week is [Spirit Week](#) in all three divisions! The days will be tailored to the unique interests of each division. While this will have a different feel than if we were all together on campus, I hope it sheds some sunshine on the week for your children. We are saving an all-school CA Spiritwear Day for later this spring. We continue with our assemblies every “A” day (next week it will be on Thursday, April 16). If you missed Wednesday’s assembly, it can be [found here](#).

Tech Help

SeeSaw recently fixed an issue with its app related to Google Slides. If the iPad your child is using is a school-owned iPad, please go into the “Self Service” app and reinstall SeeSaw. You may also need to install/update Google Slides via Self Service. If it is your own device, you can update and/or install via the App Store, like you would any other app/game on your iPad or iPhone. Feel free to contact our [technology department](#) if you have questions about the apps we use for online learning or if your child is using a school-issued iPad.

I welcome your continued feedback and if a survey in the future closes before you submit it, simply [email me](#) your thoughts and ideas. I hope your family remains healthy and this extra time together as a family is cherished. Thank you for your continued support, encouragement and suggestions.

Warm Regards,
Mark