

April 10, 2020

Dear Upper School Families,

Week #2 of online learning is on the books, and not a day has gone by where our school community is not learning something new -- about our resilience, our creativity or our tech skills. Having heard many anecdotes about the ways in which US teachers and students are adapting to our current way of doing school, I'm impressed with how virtual breakout groups can sometimes resemble in-person teaching, and how well amateur video demonstrations deliver content with a side helping of humor and humanness. All that said, it makes sense that we are still calibrating our methods in an online environment, and we appreciate your feedback as we get up and running.

Below is some information that speaks to a few of the common threads from last week's survey in addition to other topical items:

Grading/Final Exams -- After careful consideration and exploration of trends with similar institutions around how to approach grading in our new online world, we decided we will continue to issue grades for the fourth quarter. With three-quarters of the year's learning behind us, we felt it was reasonable to issue year-end grades for all students. The philosophy will allow for a growth mindset and the notion that some students are hitting their stride near the end of the year, all the while being flexible and accommodating with students for whom this model is more challenging. Additionally, final exams will not be administered this spring. Since in-person review and preparation is hampered in our current situation, our energy will shift to ongoing learning and strengthening social connections.

Note: Quarter 3 Grades are available for viewing in [My BackPack](#).

Assessments -- Online assessments will take many forms depending on the class. Thanks to Google Docs, many students are able to share drafts of written work directly with teachers for insight and editing. Students may also receive PDFs of assessments through Google Classroom which can then be completed, photographed and turned back in via Google Classroom. Desmos, Edpuzzle and Flipgrid, to name a few, are more programs that allow for teachers to collect evidence of learning in an individualized, secure manner.

Attendance -- Please be sure to email Jennifer Lange at langej@columbusacademy.org whenever your child misses a morning class or advisory.

AP Exams -- All students registered for AP Exams will take those exams on a different timeline/format. Please see the helpful links below. For additional questions related to your children's AP exams, consider contacting your children's teachers or the College Counseling office.

- [AP Exam Schedule](#)

- [Frequently Asked Questions](#)

Senior Projects -- While many of the projects our seniors had planned to do in May cannot happen in the way they envisioned it, we are moving forward with a reduced model so that seniors may still explore a topic of interest from home, research a burning question or consider signing up for a free, newly opened college course. Seniors were sent a survey to help us guide them in whatever new direction they elect to go. Feel free to gently nudge your senior to see if they have completed it. We're still shy about 40% of the responses.

From College Counseling -- Grade 10 families will hear from College Counseling in the coming week. Although the traditional Grade 10 Academic Conferences will not occur at CA as previously planned, nor on the dates previously scheduled, college counselors are excitedly working on online Grade 10 conferences which will be equally productive and informative. Please stay tuned.

From Health Services -- During this time of increased stress, coupled with isolation from friends, the concern exists that our adolescents may engage in, or begin to experiment with, alcohol, recreational drugs or vaping. The combination of their loss of athletics, music performances and arts endeavors, along with additional time and freedom, makes it increasingly more concerning. We realize managing work schedules and monitoring your high-schoolers at this time is stressful, and every household operates differently. Some parents are working from home, while others must go to work and leave their teens home alone. We would like to remind you to start a discussion with your teen regarding healthy behaviors. With teens in the house, we urge parents to carefully monitor any alcohol or prescription drugs that are kept at home. In addition, remind them that the dangers of vaping increase the threat to health for anyone infected by the COVID19 virus, since it will more easily attack compromised lungs. As always, please feel free to contact our psychologist or nurses if you have any additional questions.

Recent 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 year in Judaism, Christianity, Catholicism and Islam. 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.

Themed Dress Week (a.k.a Spirit Week) -- Compliments of our Student Council, US students should watch for a message this weekend outlining the special dress days for next week. Hopefully this will bring a little levity and variety to week #3 of doing school at home.

Thank you again for all the ways in which you provide support for US children during these challenging times. May you continue to find ways to enjoy the additional time together as a family. As always, don't hesitate to contact us with questions or concerns.

Warm Regards,
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