

THE PARK SCHOOL of BALTIMORE

Park's Transition to Distance Learning

Dear Park School Students, Parents, and Caregivers,

So much has changed since we last gathered on campus, and as our scheduled spring break draws to a close, we are all creating a new understanding of what Park will look like for the coming weeks and, perhaps, months. As we are all aware, health authorities and government officials continue to consider the necessary duration of social distancing and other important practices essential to public safety. We must recognize that there is a great likelihood that we will not return to campus in this academic year, and that we will be finishing our classes through distance learning. We will follow a course of action that best protects the health and safety of our community and public health at large — and will seek to create meaningful learning experiences in new ways.

At this time, I am especially thinking about our incredible group of seniors — our **Park Class of 2020** — who have served as powerful student leaders over the course of this year. They are a talented and committed group of academicians, athletes, artists, and advocates — I am so proud of them and proud of the ways in which they embody Park's values. As we, and they, inevitably wonder about graduation, prom, and other events that would typically serve to honor and celebrate their final year at Park, I want to be clear: we will find ways to celebrate all of you, and if we cannot gather for commencement ceremonies this June, we will mark this as a postponement and not a cancellation. *Seniors, you have my promise that we will find a time to gather with you to recognize officially your commencement.*

For all Park students and families, you no doubt have questions about how distance learning will look and feel in the coming days. Please know that our dedicated faculty and administrators have been meeting virtually to consider both the technical side of distance learning (*What are the best tools available to all? What happens if technology fails? Can we support families who are managing with multiple academic and professional needs at the same time(s) of day?*) as well as the academic, social, and emotional issues that distance learning raises (*How much time is optimal for teachers and students to be "together" online? How can we ensure that students have enough structure to their academic day? How will we create regular opportunities for student/teacher connection that provide a sense of belonging and agency?*). These are only a few of the questions that we are considering together, and will continue to reflect on as we launch this effort as a community.

This new experience calls for great **adaptability and flexibility** as we employ new ways of teaching, learning, and connecting. Some initiatives will likely work beautifully, and others will need to be modified as we move ahead. We have benefitted over the last many days through regular check-ins with independent school colleagues on the west coast who have already launched their distance learning schedules. As we build our own plans, we are very much taking into consideration early lessons learned at other schools (*e.g. less is more in terms of synchronous learning; don't overload our students and families as we and they establish new routines and learn new technologies; pay attention to our students' need for down time and for "hangout" time with us and with each other*).

We will want and need to hear from you — students and parents alike — as we work together to build routines that are **effective and sustainable**. The beauty of The Park School program is that it is supported by a framework that honors the unique skill sets and experiences of our remarkable teachers, and gains strength from their frequent collaboration, cross-disciplinary openness, and connection with the greater world. *Please know that we will be working together over the coming days and weeks to ensure the very best learning experience for our students.*

Below, I lay out plans for the next few days. As you will see, we want to use time this week to check in with both students and parents; to respond to questions and concerns; to ensure that we have supports in place (through our technology support team, our learning resource teachers, and our counselors) so that families can access what they need from our team; and to engage our students in learning activities prior to the launch of a distance learning schedule this coming **Monday, March 30**. We are moving deliberately this week both to establish with all Park families some common understandings about what school will look like, and to give our faculty members planning time together. What we know is this: school cannot and will not look the same as it would were we on campus together, but it can and will reflect our commitment to our students' continued growth through **deep learning, real discovery, and creative problem-solving**.

Central to the Park philosophy is the notion that positive expectations produce positive virtues. **As such, our work as adults — faculty, parents, and administrators — is to believe in our children and to support them even through the most difficult of challenges.** While there are many logistical matters to consider and to adjust to, my message to you today is, fundamentally, that The Park School community is here for you. And as we discover new ways to cultivate our students' innate curiosity, we remain committed to doing what Park School has always done best: to nurture our students' many interests and to engage them as active participants in their own education. Perhaps never has it been more important for our children to become confident questioners and responsible citizens of this world. With your support and partnership, we will help our students emerge more capable and better prepared for any challenge they might face throughout their lives.

Please continue reading below for details about the coming days, as well as an FAQ regarding distance learning.

Dan Paradis
Head of School

These first three days back (March 25, 26, and 27) will consist of some key elements that support the launch of our distance learning programs, beginning on **Monday, March 30**.

Video Messages for Parents and Students

Patti and Traci, Josh and Alpana, and Malika and Matt want to greet you, to welcome you back from break, and to share some information about the preparations for distance learning that have been taking place. To that end, the divisional leadership teams will share a recorded video message with parents and students at **9 a.m. on Wednesday, March 25**. (*The videos can be viewed as your schedule allows.*)

Division-Specific Resources

As the principals continue to work with faculty this week to develop and share plans, they'll be directing you tomorrow (March 25) to more information where you can gain a sense of the new schedule for Monday, the tools that we will be employing, and the methodology going forward. These resources, of course, will evolve and grow over time, but you will have a central go-to point to stay informed.

Check-Ins with Advisors and Homeroom Teachers

We know how important it is that students hear from their advisor or, in Lower School, their homeroom teacher. Principals will follow up with you on Wednesday regarding how and when this will happen in each division on **Thursday, March 26**.

Also on Thursday, Upper Schoolers will receive information regarding each of their academic disciplines, outlining assignments or review work required in preparation for Monday's launch.

Friday Communication

Principals will be in touch with all families in their divisions on Friday to make sure everyone is oriented and ready for distance learning to begin on Monday.

Distance Learning FAQ

What will students do during distance learning?

During distance learning, students will follow an appropriate schedule as set forth by their teachers and division principal.

Teachers will use existing systems (Veracross, Google, Park email, etc.) to communicate lessons and expectations. In advance of each "lesson," teachers will post instructions, links, and learning materials on the appropriate systems. Students (Middle School and Upper School) are encouraged to reach out to their teachers if they have any questions or complications, or if an assignment is unclear.

Lower School students will have a single Google Site where families will find links to their child's homeroom class website, which will include a weekly schedule and links to subject area lessons, projects, and activities. Students will be provided with a variety of offline and online lessons.

Middle School will also be working from a Google Site that parents and students will access. This site contains grade-level-specific daily schedules, information about House, homework and long term assignments, and other resources that students will find to be helpful. The site will be updated regularly.

What will a typical distance learning day look like?

Distance learning will take on many forms, as Park teachers will employ a range of tools, platforms, and techniques to facilitate learning and engagement. Students are familiar with a number of tools, which can be accessed anywhere, including our learning management system (Veracross) and Google Classroom, discipline-specific software (such as Pearson Realize for Math), and video conferencing platforms (Google Meet, Zoom, etc.). Faculty will also create offline assignments and projects that will not require devices.

Will students have homework?

Students will be expected to complete and submit assignments for academic classes in Middle and Upper School while we are in distance learning mode. This is also the case for our Lower School students — specifically for Grades 2 - 5, who will submit assignments in Google Classroom. In that sense, yes, there will be homework. All Lower School students are expected to continue their at-home expectations of work, including grade-designated times for reading.

Will Park's usual rules and policies apply?

Yes, all Park rules and guidelines as outlined in our Student Handbooks will apply. These include those related to our policies for academic integrity, academic work, and student conduct as related to the Park community. Take time to review your child's divisional Acceptable Use Policy ([Lower](#), [Middle](#), and [Upper](#)) and remind them that our [Harassment Policy](#) includes online behavior.

Should you or your students have questions, they should reach out to their dean, advisor, or teacher.

Will attendance be taken?

Students will be expected to attend scheduled online meetings with teachers and complete assigned projects and lessons. Optional activities will also be provided. Specific measurements of attendance and participation will be shared by individual teachers, with support of the divisional leadership teams.

What about athletics, co-curriculars, and activities?

When the campus is closed for distance learning, all on-campus activities will be canceled or postponed. Teams, ensembles, clubs, and other student groups, however, are strongly encouraged to hold virtual meetings (or similar) in order to maintain social connections with each other and, if possible, to continue their work **remotely**. **Please expect to hear from your principals and deans about this.** Middle and Upper School coaches will have regularly scheduled check-ins with their teams via Zoom and email. They will also provide conditioning and skill work suggestions via email.

How can I help my child during this time of distance learning?

Distance learning, especially as a result of a public health crisis, may be challenging for some students. Our K-12 counseling team has created a [document of resources](#) to support your family's social and emotional well-being.

Should you need to contact a member of the counseling team, reach out to:

Zella Adams (Lower School Counselor): zadams@parkschool.net
Krista Dhruv (Middle and Upper School Counselor): kdhruv@parkschool.net
Porscha Henson (Middle and Upper School Counselor): phenson@parkschool.net

Additionally, our K-12 Learning Resource Team is prepared to support

families. Should you need to contact a member of the Learning Resource Team, reach out to:

Susan Eisner (Lower School Resource Teacher): seisner@parkschool.net

Debbie Dolan (Middle School Resource Teacher): ddolan@parkschool.net

Karyn Fisher (Upper School Resource Teacher): kfisher@parkschool.net

Whom should I contact if I have questions or concerns?

Should you have any questions, please reach out to your child's classroom teacher or advisor. Other adults who should be contacted include:

Malika DeLancey (Lower School Principal): mdelancey@parkschool.net

Matt Doyle (Lower School Assistant Principal): mdoyle@parkschool.net

Josh Wolf (Middle School Principal): jwolf@parkschool.net

Alpana Chhibber (Middle School Dean of Students): achhibber@parkschool.net

Patti Porcarelli (Upper School Principal): pporcarelli@parkschool.net

Traci Wright (Upper School Dean of Students): twright@parkschool.net