

TRINITY SCHOOL

AT MEADOW VIEW

Dear Parents,

First of all, I would like to express my gratitude for your patience and partnership as we enter an educational arena that we never intended to set foot in. Distance learning is obviously not how any of us envision a Trinity School education! However, for as long as the current situation holds, we are committed to doing the best version of distance learning that we can. I want to publicly thank our faculty not only for all the hard work that they have already done, but also for the hard work that remains.

We have a core team that is working closely with faculty across our schools to innovate and troubleshoot as we employ the technology we need to communicate with students. We are also responding to inevitable bumps in the road that we encounter and what we hear from you as parents about what is working well, what could be improved, and what some of your long-term concerns for your children's education are. We anticipate that it will take around one more week for us to adjust our practices and principles before settling a pattern that will help you and your children know what to expect, when to expect it, and how to navigate this new situation.

I wanted to take a moment to let you know three core principles that are guiding our decision making:

- We are committed to providing as excellent an experience of distance learning as possible, but we are not thinking in terms of "online education." We intend for your children to encounter the world and encounter reality through the assignments they receive from their teachers. We are trying hard to limit the amount of time they actually have to spend online.
- We are committed to making this distance learning opportunity genuinely unique, and not merely trying to replicate what happens in the classroom. While we believe that we can accomplish many of the same ends, we do recognize that we will have to do so through different means. You can expect us to introduce some innovative approaches to material in the next several days. During this time, we want our students to continue to be intellectually challenged, experience genuine wonder, and engage in serious inquiry. Faculty will be meeting across classes, across disciplines, and even across campuses to share ideas and develop new ways in which to fulfill our mission.
- We are committed to using this opportunity to explore the extent to which we can encourage students to be agents of their own learning. There is certainly a risk under these circumstances that students become more passive and

dependent upon a mundane transfer of information. While contact with faculty will almost certainly be less frequent and of lesser duration, all of us are excited to see what our students may be able to do with some additional creative freedom.

Though it will take some time to adjust to this new situation and begin to realize our aims, we intend to run every decision we make through the principles above, as well as through our existing aims for education.

Here are some of the concerns we have heard from you already that we will try to address this week:

- We understand that some students are experiencing the feeling of needing to be online "24-7" to keep up. This is certainly not our intention, and we are working on ways in which to help students avoid this sense of expectation.
- Some are feeling overwhelmed with the volume of information and various ways in which it is being delivered. We knew some initial confusion would be inevitable and are working on some much clearer principles for communication.
- In light of the above, some parents are finding it challenging to assist their children. This has been especially true if they need to do so in the morning before leaving for work. We hope to get to a point where, if you wish to help your children get situated for the morning, you should be able to print off everything they need to have in hand for the day's work by 8:00 AM and work with them to create a more regular schedule and routine.
- Some parents are reasonably concerned about the culture to which their children might be exposed with too much access to new technology and little time to have prepared them. This is a reasonable concern and we hope to address it by giving you a clear sense of our expectations for online work (which are limited) and some guidelines for how to manage your child's online time.

You should be hearing from your local head of school very soon about some of the steps that we are putting in place to address these concerns.

Later this week, after you and your children have had some time to experience the adjustments, we will send out an optional parent survey to hear your thoughts on how things are going, what we might do to improve, and what questions you have at that point.

I will leave you with this quote from "Learning in Wartime," a sermon C.S. Lewis's delivered in Britain in 1939. Though we are not literally at war, the disruptive situation in which we find ourselves with COVID-19 raises many of the same questions that Lewis and his comrades faced at the beginning of World War II. What does it mean to learn at a time like this? What does learning mean to us as human beings in the face of crisis like the one we are undergoing? How do we balance permanent things with the immediate concerns of the moment?

Lewis writes:

"I think it important to try to see the present calamity in a true perspective, The war

creates no absolutely new situation: it simply aggravates the permanent human situation so that we can no longer ignore it. Human life has always been lived on the edge of a precipice. Human culture has always had to exist under the shadow of something infinitely more important than itself. If men had postponed the search for knowledge and beauty until they were secure the search would never have begun. We are mistaken when we compare war with 'normal life.' Life has never been normal. Even those periods which we think most tranquil, like the nineteenth century, turn out, on closer inspection, to be full of cries, alarms, difficulties, emergencies. Plausible reasons have never been lacking for putting off all merely cultural activities until some imminent danger has been averted or some crying injustice put right. But humanity long ago chose to neglect those plausible reasons. They wanted knowledge and beauty now, and would not wait for the suitable moment that never come."

May the Lord bless you and your family in this difficult time.

Sincerely,

Jon Balsbaugh
President, Trinity Schools