

March 25, 2020

Dear Grace Community:

Earlier today, Governor Hogan announced that all Maryland public schools will be closed until April 24. Given this decision and with all that we are reading about this virus, Grace will follow that same course and be physically closed but offering remote learning beginning again on Monday, March 30. Teachers will post plans for Monday's lessons on Sunday, March 29 by 7 pm and we will continue to update you on our long-term plans to keep instruction on pace.

I have had a chance to speak to some of you by phone this week as you continue to grapple with this new normal. I know so many parents are juggling their own work life alongside their young children. You are also managing your own fears about yourself and your loved ones as this virus moves rapidly across our country. It is a remarkably challenging time and you have my compassion and virtual hugs as you continue to navigate this crisis.

What I have come to realize is that this situation will require us to be patient and open to experimentation and challenge. We will have days ahead of us that are utterly impossible and far outside any plan we may have envisioned for ourselves. We will also make amazing discoveries about our relationships, what matters to us most, and how resilient and strong we can be in the face of change and upheaval. I think your children have a real opportunity to show you how much they have already learned this year; ask them to guide you through some of the rituals and routines of their days at school. This is a time for them to lead and grow in ways they otherwise could not.

I also know that your children's teachers are very committed to remaining deeply involved in the growth and wellbeing of each of your children. Last Monday, when we gathered for the last time in person to plan, I was moved by their flexibility, ingenuity, and willingness to prepare to build something new. They are learning alongside your children and you as they create the plans for this time away. They also miss the children very much.

As we head into remote learning next week, I offer some additional information to help us get prepared:

- Teachers will post plans for Monday's lessons by 7 pm on Sunday, March 29. Refer to the Google folder your child was accessing last week.
- Gail Kennedy and Pam Yarrington will be in touch separately with information about content and lessons from specialist teachers.
- We will continue to explore and introduce ways that we can connect virtually including a Zoom assembly next Friday - stay tuned!
- Our school counselor Renee Stewart will offer Friday mini tele-health conferences you can access on a platform called Doxy. She will be in touch with more information.

- I will be offering two parent Zoom calls next week so that we can connect and I can hear how you are doing at home with your children. I will send those links via email. I hope to maintain these each week.
- Expect to continue receiving the Gryphon News each Thursday with important updates from us.

I always like to share articles that have been helpful to me. The first is from [Harvard Business Review](#) and it is about grief. It identifies how important it is to “feel your sadness and fear and anger whether or not someone else is feeling something. Fighting it doesn’t help because your body is producing the feeling. If we allow the feelings to happen, they’ll happen in an orderly way, and it empowers us. Then we’re not victims.” Each evening, my family gathers for dinner and it is at that gathering where we do a check-in to see how each of us is faring. It’s been a helpful routine for our collective and individual processing. The [second](#) article offers some tips for working from home with kids. I hope there might be a new thought or idea in this one to help you balance. We’ve posted links to these articles on our [“bonus resources”](#) page as well.

I leave you with a passage from one of my favorite books, *When Things Fall Apart* by Buddhist nun Pema Chodron:

“Things falling apart is a kind of testing and also a kind of healing. We think that the point is to pass the test or to overcome the problem, but the truth is that things don’t really get solved. They come together and they fall apart. Then they come together again and fall apart again. It’s just like that. The healing comes from letting there be room for all of this to happen: room for grief, for relief, for misery, for joy.”

I am sending you all my best right now. We will “see” each other next week.

Warmest wishes,

Jen