



BROOKLYN FRIENDS SCHOOL

April 3, 2020

Greetings Middle School Families:

We hope this email finds you and your families in good health and managing the pandemic and its side effects with as much grace as possible; we recognize that this is not easy. The middle school has therefore been very hard at work on making our Virtual Middle School even more aligned with best practices in remote learning. We were also committed to making the program more navigable and easy on students and their families. This remains an evolutionary process, and we welcome your feedback ongoingly and are counting on your flexibility and understanding as we all navigate this new reality.

We are very excited to announce the launch of Middle School Remote Learning 2.0. We will begin this new program starting on Monday, April 6th, and it is very important for you to read the contents of this letter and attachments, as it does represent a shift in our current program; we want students to feel as prepared as possible. Monday's schedule will include an Extended Advisory in the morning to support students in further understanding the new program, and time will be allotted to answer questions.

About the New Program - Remote Learning 2.0

Thank you all for your patience this past week as we ironed out some additional details and structures that we believe center the most important aspects of schooling for adolescents in these unprecedented times. The modifications made to the program center the need for students to feel connected, supported, and in a predictable routine. While we certainly believe that academic skills and content remain important, the social and emotional wellbeing of our students is at the forefront of our minds. To summarize, we wanted to accomplish the following by creating a new schedule for Remote Learning in the Middle School:

- Physical activity every day
- Time and space to continue engaging in collections, Meeting for Worship, and other community-building activities
- A set and robust block of time within the school day to complete independent work on GClassroom and/or receive small group or 1:1 support with teachers
- Reintroducing our amazing visual arts, performing arts, PE, health, library and study skills colleagues into structured elective offerings that will meet three times per week. This program is completely open to all students in all grades, removing the barriers of scheduling and room conflicts that were present in our Pearl Street program.

- DEAR time blocks to encourage students getting off screens (if possible) and into a good book or other reading material
- Structured offerings for mental health and emotional support
- Lots of opportunities for connecting with each other with the goal of joy, excitement & fun!

[Panthers Central](#) - Our New Website for Everything Remote Learning Grades 5-8

Your children, our students, have been doing an amazing job managing all of the emails and communications, Zoom links, GClassroom, and more, but we recognized quickly that this needs to be more efficient for everyone. Here is a link to our new website: "Panthers Central." A few quick notes about the website:

- The Home Page will be reviewed every morning during AM Advisory and will be updated daily it helps students understand what's happening for the day, and in the future will include announcements about fun and exciting ways to engage with peers, adults, and the entire community.
- We recommend that for now, your second stop is the Schedules page, where you will find a link to the new Remote Learning Schedules by Advisory.
- Initially, this website reflects a central location for information and communications for students and families. It is our full intention moving forward that as Panthers Central evolves, it will become a hub of exciting news, activities, and opportunities for creative student engagement. To navigate the different pages on the website, notice the drop-down menu toolbar at the top right-hand corner. It states "Home" when you are on the landing page.

Finally, in the days ahead, if there's anything missing from this website that you'd like to see added - or if you'd like to make a suggestion - please navigate to the last [Suggestions Page](#).

Some Notes About the New Schedule

The new schedules are organized by Advisory. Your child merely needs to select the Zoom links or GClassroom links of their teachers. Teaching periods remain 30 minutes, but we are reducing the morning schedule to four periods per day, and then students have two-hours of independent work time each afternoon to engage in completing the work posted on GClassroom. Every day, students will login to a grade wide physical activity break from 10:05 - 10:35 with one of our PE teachers - hey, you may even want to join in! We have also incorporated a virtual "hangout" for students to take a break and chill with friends virtually. Finally, every day ends with an hour of electives or a community time activity and then office hours with their teachers.

In a survey, linked below, we ask middle school families to let us know your interest in having the school sponsor occasional and optional evening events for your children. Please let us know! Movie nights, bake-offs, virtual dances... We've got lots of ideas already!

Attendance at Virtual School, Student Expectations, and Student Virtual Safety

Although our remote school day has had an 8:30 start time to be a little more supportive of extra rest, please know that attendance expectations remain in effect. If a child is more than five minutes late to AM Advisory, they will be marked tardy for the day in our attendance

records. Advisors will also be emailing families when a child who has been confirmed to be present has not attended a live Zoom meeting; it is the expectation that students are on time and engaged during synchronous learning.

We would also like to highlight that it is a critical expectation that students show their faces during Zoom meetings. We have many mechanisms in place to create a secure environment for Zoom meetings, but “imposters” can still happen over Zoom, and our only way to be 100% certain of who is in the virtual room is by being able to see them. For this reason, it is also critical that there be no phones in a child’s workspace unless a teacher has specifically delineated the need for a phone during a lesson. We have received reports of children who are taking advantage of the environment and snapping uncomplimentary pictures of their peers over Zoom. Please also note that all Zoom meetings are being recorded by the host. If the Zoom meeting contains important instruction, these videos will be posted on the teacher’s GClassroom page to accommodate families who are currently in different time zones or otherwise have barriers to participating in synchronous learning.

Finally, please be sure your child knows never to accept a meeting invitation on Zoom from a person whose name they don’t recognize or from an email that is not a BFS email address.

For a comprehensive list of student conduct expectations in the time of Remote Learning, please reference Panthers Central under “[Tech Help & Online Etiquette.](#)”

Please Complete: [Parent Survey](#)

We would love to hear how each student and family is doing during this time. We also have some questions about what supplies students have at home for learning. Please note that questions pertaining to what is available at home are not suggestions for families to purchase anything! The information regarding what is available to students at home will help teachers plan thoughtfully for engaging, hands-on lessons.

Finally, please remember that next week is a short week due to the holidays. In addition to good health, we wish you all a Happy Easter, Chag Sameach, or Happy Spring! We look forward to seeing you again soon. Forthcoming will be communication about Mid-Semester grades, Parent-Teacher Conferences, and more. In the meantime, it’s been bringing all of us great joy to be able to continue engaging with your children online during this difficult time.

Respectfully,

Glen Pinder & The Middle School Leadership Team