Saturday, March 14, 2020

Dear BLS Students and Families,

You have all been on my mind constantly as we begin to navigate these truly unsettled and unprecedented times. As we learned yesterday evening, Boston Public Schools will be closed for students on Tuesday, March 17 and will reopen on Monday, April 27. I know that you have many questions, worries, and thoughts as we try to balance our appreciation of the seriousness of this public health crisis with our sense of loss for all of the things we were looking forward to this spring, in addition to wondering what this will all look like for us once school on the Avenue has been suspended.

We remain committed to transparency and to sharing information as it unfolds. Over the next several days, we will offer more guidance and direction with respect to BLS expectations and resources for students as we transition to a virtual space. The reality is that instruction will not be the same, but we are committed to the continued growth and development of our young people. Students and families will undoubtedly have questions about assessments, requirements, grades, and promotion. This information will be forthcoming; we ask that you please be patient with us as we work out the details, and as we learn more of the district-wide expectations for all BPS staff during this temporary closure. Our immediate focus is obtaining information from you as we address our most pressing issue: Monday’s school day and ensuring that we get students what they need in order for them to shift to a virtual space.

There may be some students who will need to come to campus on Monday, to borrow technology, retrieve textbooks from lockers, instruments from the music wing, medications from the nurses’ office, to check in around social-emotional wellness, or to participate in our universal free breakfast and lunch program. For all students who will come to campus on Monday, we ask that students (or parents on behalf of their students, if necessary) fill out this form by noon tomorrow (Sunday) if at all possible: https://forms.gle/oC9sxwAuo8UsJB1y9

For those students who lack a computer for distance learning, BLS will loan our Chromebooks. If you already have a computer but no internet access, you do not need to come into school. We will send information soon about free wifi access for BPS students. It is important for us to preserve our technology supply for those who need it; please do not take a Chromebook if you already have a laptop or desktop, but definitely borrow one if you need it! To help manage this process, we really need you to complete the survey. Here is the link again: https://forms.gle/oC9sxwAuo8UsJB1y9. Results of this survey will help us to organize and staff the day. If you have friends whom you know aren’t great on email or don’t have access to either digital technology or the internet, please contact them and have them log on and complete this survey asap. Or you could even fill out the form for them with their student ID number (with their permission, of course).

We are acutely mindful of the guidelines to limit the size of gatherings and the necessity to maintain social distancing. Students will not miss instruction if they are absent on Monday (all absences tomorrow are excused). We will also allow early dismissal for any student (regardless of age) who comes with a note signed by you that includes your contact information. We respectfully ask parents who plan to drop off or pick up children not to enter the school building. If students need to speak with a staff member, we strongly suggest that they send an email first, to ensure that individual will be in. We can not stress
enough the importance of heeding public health guidelines; be very clear that Monday at BLS is not an opportunity to socialize with peers, but to equip students with necessary materials and services if required.

To give us all time to process this new reality and our teachers a chance to develop strategies for communicating with students, we are recommending a moratorium on all new school-work for one week beginning now. Teachers may reach out to students via Google Classroom or other means in advance of Monday, March 23, but not for the purpose of assigning time-sensitive work. We suggest that students use the coming days to review past material and catch up on assignments they may have missed due to any absences last week, read a book for their own enrichment and enjoyment, and to make sure they are up to date with requirements such as course selection forms.

Our scholars are used to tests. COVID-19 will test us in unimaginable ways. I was scrolling Instagram today and saw a post from Cory Booker that resonated: “Concerts, sporting events, school and more are being canceled. Kindness, decency, generosity, grace, and love must never be. We will rise to meet this challenge together.”

Take care of yourselves, your families, and each other.

Rachel Skerritt ’95
Headmaster