Sunday, March 15, 2020

Dear BLS Students and Families,

I am reaching out this evening to provide further clarity and guidance around school attendance and expectations tomorrow, Monday, March 16. **As a reminder, all absences from Boston Public Schools tomorrow are excused.**

Many thanks to all those who have responded to the survey that was emailed yesterday, or have otherwise reached out. We have been overwhelmed and gratified by the support and positive thoughts you have shared, and the information that students provided was invaluable to our developing a plan for tomorrow that positions students properly for campus closure but that also respects social distancing.

Based on survey responses, it appears that most students who plan to come to school tomorrow are doing so only to retrieve personal items, mostly from their school or athletic lockers. **To alleviate crowding, we will be opening the building early, from 6:15 - 7:45 am to allow students to come in and exit quickly. If you are only coming to campus to retrieve an item, this is your window to enter and exit the building.** Parents who are driving their students to school may idle on the Avenue in single file, on the odd side of the street, avoiding crosswalks and driveways. We must keep the Avenue clear for emergency access. It is also helpful to make arrangements to park and wait on the surrounding streets. Student lockers are spread throughout the building. Please ask your student(s) where the closest exit is to their belongings when determining where to wait.

Nurses have already communicated with parents whose students have diabetic supplies and daily meds stored at school. **If students have an epipen, inhaler, or other medications at school, they can pick them up at the Nurses’ office (beginning at 7am tomorrow) or families can call the nurses at 617-635-7881 to arrange for pick up.**

**If students have planned to come to school tomorrow to meet with a teacher about make-up work or an administrator about an excused absence, they can communicate by email instead. If they were coming to campus to drop off a letter, form, or assignment in hard copy, they can send it to their intended recipient electronically.**
Students who need loaner Chromebooks must stay for the extended homeroom period, but may be dismissed after that point with an early dismissal note from a parent/guardian. As you may have heard in the automated message from BPS today, more information is forthcoming regarding free wifi availability for students. The automated message also described printed learning materials that some schools will be providing. BLS will not be utilizing the district’s printed materials, so it is essential that every student have access to a laptop or desktop during the campus closure.

For those who remain at school for the day, we will run a bell schedule similar to what we employ during the first two days of school. This schedule includes an extended homeroom period, followed by short 20 minute classes. Students should be aware that not all faculty will be on campus, and there will be no new instruction given during these classes. By Monday, March 23, teachers will connect with students about school work assignments and expectations.

There will be support throughout the school day tomorrow if students require an in-person conference related to social-emotional wellness needs. Dr. Prosper and Dr. Kaye will be available for students who may need in-person check-ins, and we are already beginning to think about virtual models going forward.

Students may be dismissed early (but after 10:00 a.m.) with a note from a parent/guardian that includes their contact information. To help the day run as smoothly as possible, we ask that early dismissals not occur before 10:00 am and that everyone adhere to the guidelines in this communication. Tomorrow will undoubtedly be one of expected and unexpected complications. Please make sure that families have made a plan with students as to when and where they are to go when they leave campus.

Free breakfast and lunch will be served tomorrow at their regular times.

Lastly, we heard from students that they intended to come to school tomorrow to take make-up tests and/or quizzes. We will not be administering any assessments tomorrow, whether they are new or make-ups. We are aware that some students may be disappointed by this, as they might have prepared for a test or quiz and they want the opportunity to take it. We are in the midst of an unprecedented global health emergency and we cannot support a practice that will bring more students to campus unnecessarily. While we can’t tell you exactly how your teacher will treat this missed assignment (as the virtual back up plan may vary greatly depending on the subject matter and nature of the assessment), we can assure you that it will not count negatively. And we can also assure you that we have time to figure it out. We will provide greater clarity on excused assignments, grading, and timelines in the days to come.
We will continue to reach out with frequency as we undergo this transition. Once we get students what they need tomorrow, we will shift our attention and communication to the logistics of online learning.

Thank you for your collaboration and support as we navigate these waters together.

Sincerely,

Rachel Skerritt
Headmaster