Dear BLS Students and Families:

First and foremost, we are hopeful that this message finds you all in good health and spirits. As you receive communications from us over the next several weeks on a variety of topics, know that health and safety supersedes all. **Students and families should not hesitate to reach out to their school counselor or school nurses if there is a family circumstance related to the coronavirus crisis about which we should be aware.** We want to offer support in any way possible.

The connectivity of our school community over the past week has been inspiring. Despite the huge obstacle of physical distance, peers are supporting one another (from our 2020 Class President’s thoughtful email to his classmates, to a senior’s development of a community service project from home); teachers are sharing best practices for virtual learning; and families are trading ideas and resources as they prepare for new realities in their households. There has also been tremendous outreach and support as staff, students, and parents have been communicating with one another - whether to talk through practical questions, or to alleviate stress through a Spanish language soap opera virtual viewing.

Our resilient and motivated students are eager to get started with our new normal, as are many families from whom we’ve heard. We must remember all are coming from different starting points; some are ready to engage in virtual platforms and have all the resources they need, while other students may not have been in school to receive Chromebooks during our distribution and are waiting to receive one from Boston Public Schools. Others may be having Wifi challenges. For students with tech needs, BPS is offering free Chromebooks, and the city has shared low-cost options for Internet connectivity. Some families may understandably be more concerned with accessing essential resources, such as meals. If you or someone you know would like to take advantage of “grab and go” free meals, there are 16 **food sites** across the city, including Boston Latin School (open weekdays from 8:30 - 11:30 a.m.).

Our city and school district are making careful and thoughtful decisions about how to proceed with the rest of the academic year in light of these unprecedented challenges around equity and access. We do not yet have answers about report cards, marking period dates, and other related nuts and bolts. **We deeply appreciate your patience.**

At BLS, our focus for the next seven days will be onboarding students to the virtual learning space. Our teachers and administrators have spent countless hours preparing for this launch. Here’s what students can expect for the week ahead, along with answers to the most pressing questions.

**CLASSROOM EXPECTATIONS**

1. **By Monday at 8:00 am, all teachers will have posted their activities and assignments for the week of 3/23 in Google Classrooms.** We are taking this “week at a time” approach so that students can best organize their time in partnership with their families.
2. Students should expect to devote approximately 2 ½ hours per week for each subject that meets every day in your regular school schedule, and one hour per week for classes that meet
less frequently during the regular school year. For this coming week, there will be no
differentiation in time expectations for AP and non-AP classes.
3. Some teachers will have live video and/or interactive experiences over the course of the week; however, if a student cannot be present in real time, they can access video archives of these meetings/conversations.
4. Faculty members will also have established a virtual office hour weekly, where students can engage in real time with their teachers either through video conferencing or chat functions. Teachers will share these times in their Google classrooms, as well as the best means to access them (by appointment, etc.).
5. Depending on the course, there will be considerable variation around the type of work you’ll be doing throughout the week. However, each course will require you to turn in one assignment for the week via the online platform that your teacher stipulates (Google classroom, turnitin.com, etc.). **All of your assignments for next week’s classes will be due by Friday, 3/27 at 4 p.m.** Should an emergency arise this week that requires a delay in this submission, students should email teachers, copying their parents/guardians on their emails.
6. Again, this first week is intended to get everyone back into school mode, dive back into the content, calibrate expectations, and troubleshoot issues. The assignment due this week for each course will be reviewed by teachers and uploaded into SIS as complete. **A traditional grade will not be assigned at this time. This does not mean that the work is optional. In fact, it’s just the opposite.** If we do not receive anything from students this week, a member of our team will be contacting the student and family to determine what challenges may exist and how we can support students to participate fully.
7. This is BLS, and folks have lots of questions about grades, so I’m going to repeat #7. **This first week is our trial run; we want to assess student engagement and participation in our virtual learning programming and we need our data to be accurate. Grades for the week of March 23-27 will be recorded only as complete or incomplete.** As we move forward, and receive guidance from district and city officials, we may adjust this policy.

**MAKE UP WORK AND ATTENDANCE**

What has transpired over the past few weeks has created situations we have never encountered. When school officially closed this past Monday, many students had unresolved attendance issues and assignments left undone. **Given the unusual circumstances, all absences that occurred after March 6 will be excused.** You do not need to provide a note. This may not be reflected on SIS yet, but it will be soon.

**Tests or quizzes that occurred prior to March 16 that were not yet made up due to excused absences will not be marked as zeros.** We are working through the best ways to address these missed assessments, whether through alternate assignments or other means. This may vary based on the type of assignment; we will keep you posted on this. In the meantime, over the next two weeks you should see SIS gradebooks updated to reflect grades for work submitted before campus closure.

**NEXT STEPS**

This communication provides guidelines and expectations for the week ahead. Many outstanding questions remain. We will continue to reach out on a regular basis, providing additional information, linking resources, and sharing feedback from faculty about how we can continue to work in partnership. One thing that comes through clearly in all my conversations with teachers: students, you are missed! Over the next few weeks we will be experimenting with ways to keep our community further connected, including the Daily Bulletin (likely moved to a weekly, or twice weekly format).

**I can’t stress enough how essential it is that every student who is able fully participate in online activities and assignments.** To maintain our readiness for a return to school, to minimize learning loss, and to assess what families do not as yet have access to necessary resources, these assignments are required for BLS students.
Before replying with clarifying questions over the weekend about our academic plan for next week, we would urge families to allow students to visit their teachers’ sites on Monday and read over the assignments first. It’s possible that many questions will be answered.

Thank you for navigating these uncharted waters with us. We will ride this storm together. Stay safe and healthy.

Sincerely,

Rachel Skerritt
Headmaster