Thursday, March 26, 2020

Dear BLS Students and Families,

I hope this message finds you in continued good health and spirits. As we come to the end of our second week of this “new normal,” and with it, the launch of on-line learning, I wanted to check in with you all, to send kudos to students who have entered the virtual world of instruction with enthusiasm and optimism, to teachers for their extreme flexibility and eagerness to innovate and teach in new and different ways, and to caregivers who have remained supportive, kind, and patient.

Most students should be completing tasks and assignments due tomorrow (Friday) by 4:00 pm. Students experiencing challenges with technology access or other roadblocks should reach out to their teachers. BPS Chromebook deliveries are ongoing, but as you can imagine, completion of this project will take some time. If you are logging onto SIS in the coming days, you will likely see grades continuing to be updated from assignments due on or prior to Friday, March 13. For the assignments due tomorrow, teachers will indicate that the work is complete by entering a “P” in SIS; they will leave the entry blank if it is not submitted. Please allow time over the next week for all of these updates as faculty balance their competing demands.

It’s extremely important that everyone engage in their studies despite this alternate system of grading. It is also critical for all students to adhere to the standards of behavior contained in the BPS and BLS code of conduct while engaged in any virtual classroom activity. Learning loss will be significant if they do not interact consistently with the curriculum, and will make for a tougher return to the physical classroom space. Even an email or post on Google Classroom can serve as a positive indicator of engagement and ongoing investment in learning! Students who do not complete work or did not reach out to their teachers to provide an explanation will be contacted by a member of the administrative or student support team to see if there are needs that we can help address.

By now you likely will have heard Governor Baker’s announcement that all schools in the Commonwealth will be closed until at least May 4 in service of our collective public health. As such, we have cancelled or postponed most of our spring events, such as Alumni Weekend and Music Nights; to date, however, all end-of-year events specifically for the Classes of 2020 and 2021 remain on the calendar. In the absence of person-to-person instruction during this period of time, we are hopeful that the systems we are putting in place to educate and support our students will be impactful.

In the weeks ahead, we should have greater clarity around grades, assessments, and promotion requirements. We did want to report that the College Board has recently revised the content and administration of the Advanced Placement (AP) exams. All BLS students enrolled in AP courses are required to take the exams (or submit portfolios for pertinent subjects), and we are confident that they are already well-positioned for success. Teachers are currently completing the abbreviated curriculum with students through their online instruction, and students will then take exams online from home. To learn more about the exams as well as the College Board’s free on-line services, please visit https://apstudents.collegeboard.org/. In particular, please encourage your children to connect with their AP teachers with regard to “need to know” content, as faculty can be the best liaison between learners and now revised College Board topics. Many teachers post or share access to specific
objectives, which can help streamline student effort, identify areas of improvement and minimize stress! Any family with a circumstance that may be presenting a concern around AP exams should email our AP coordinator, Mr. Kennelly, at tkennelly@bostonpublicschools.org.

While we will continue to reach out by email for time-sensitive issues (students, please check your BPS email accounts, as well as Google classroom, daily!), a more consistent way to learn about BLS news will be through the Daily Bulletin. Although no longer “daily,” the Bulletin will run every Tuesday and Thursday and is available to everyone in the BLS community. Beginning on March 31, all students and families will receive the Bulletin. Students may use their faculty advisors for any announcements regarding BLS activities in the virtual space (club meetings, community service opportunities, etc.).

You can also find additional information and resources on our school website at www.bls.org. There you can view our nurses’ comprehensive guide, as well as information on their own virtual office hours. BLS librarians are also available online for guidance and support, Monday-Friday from 9:00 am-1:00 pm. The Boston Latin School website also features a parent-produced compilation of communications and services. Finally, although our campus is now closed and access beyond the main lobby is not permitted, the BLS dining hall is one of the city’s 16 food sites. For more information, please visit Boston Food Sites (please note: the Jackson Mann site is no longer in operation).

Continue to find safe ways to get a bit of fresh air each day, wash your hands, and stay connected to one another while strictly observing social/physical distancing. Community is critical to our collective health. Thank you for your contribution to ours.

Sincerely,

Rachel Skerritt
Headmaster