Letter to Students and Families – Preview of At-Home Learning, 10 April 2020

Dear Students and Families,

First and foremost, I want to say that I hope you are all doing well. Even though we were not surprised to hear that we will not return to the school building this year, the governor’s announcement on the 6th made the situation real and I am definitely disappointed to be away from Skyline this way.

Since the 6th, I, along with Mr. King and Ms. Gale, have been working out the logistics of our new At-Home Learning phase. We know that this will be a confusing time as students and their families navigate 7 classes, with teachers using different formats, etc. I am committed to keeping my expectations reasonable and to being creative as we work through issues together.

Right now, **several things are still unknown** and therefore our plans are incomplete—the most important of these is whether the entire district will go to a Credit/No Credit model or retain the normal Letter Grade model. Once we know more, I will communicate clearly the relationship between our At-Home Learning work and your final scores in the class.

I want to communicate right now what I DO know: The focus of our learning; the communication platforms we will use; and the format of our weeks.

**The Focus of our Learning**

Our class will be focused on**: 1) Night/Holocaust study; 2) writing an Integrated Essay (LA/SS); and 3) 20th Century Latin America content, in that order.** It’s hard to say what we will be able to finish by the end of the year, but that is our department’s general plan. I would rather be responsive to the needs of my students than try to set things in stone right now.

**How I Will Communicate**

In order to keep everything in one place, we will begin using **Microsoft** **Teams**. Announcements, lecture content, and homework assignments will be posted in a Team just for our Period 5 LA class. I understand that some of you have never used Teams but we have confidence that learning to use it will help make all our lives easier. More on that in the “Action Item” below.

Mr. King and I may also continue to use **Turnitin.com** for integrated essay assignments.

On Mondays I will also send a weekly email out via **Skyward**, as we have been doing. It will have an overview of the week with helpful reminders. All assignments and content, however, will be found on Teams.

I will also be posting materials to our websites as a backup. **I really need as many students as possible to be finding material and submitting work on Teams** to help me manage student work, but I also want there to be a Plan B. If you are having difficulty with Teams, *please* reach out!

**The Format of our Weeks**

I will deliver content for **the whole week all at once**, so that students can flex their time as needed. Students can proceed through the content in 25-minute daily chunks, or they can adjust as they see fit. To stay on track, students will need to submit their assignments by Sunday evening. However, if there are barriers to meeting that deadline, students are strongly encouraged to reach out to create an alternative plan with me.

I will also be establishing regular “**office hours**.” Email office hours will allow students to send emails asking for help and get quick responses. I am working on video conference hours (where only my face is visible, not students) but I’m still learning the best way to do that, so more on that later.

Here is the schedule for my first week. I hope can keep this schedule moving forward, but I might need to adjust based on need. I am trying to vary the times to connect with the most students possible. Any changes will be posted in Teams and in Monday emails.

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| **Office Hours – Week of April 20-24** |
|  | **Monday** | **Tuesday** | **Wednesday** | **Thursday** | **Friday** |
| **Time** | -- | 1-3pm | 10-11 am | -- | 9-11am |

**\*\*\*Action Item: Please try to do this by April 20th!\*\*\***

I am hoping that students can do their best to **log onto Teams and access our Period 5 LA team** as soon as possible so I have a sense of where we are at. There will be an Assignment under the Assignments tab and linked in the General feed called **“Teams Check-in.”** This task is **required**. I need to know as soon as possible which students need help logging in.

Here is a video created for ISD students that guides you to log into Teams: <https://screencast-o-matic.com/watch/cYfh31aVae>

Whew! That’s a lot of information but I know how stressful it can feel to be “in the dark” so I wanted to provide a little bit more before Monday the 20th.

I will largely be unavailable for email during our Spring Break (catching up on grading and getting ahead on planning) but will get back to my inbox on the 20th , so feel free to send me messages. We—me, Mr. King, Ms. Gale, literally every teacher and administrator at Skyline—all know that this At-Home Learning phase is going to have challenges and we are ready to be flexible. We ask that you extend the same grace to us as we learn how best to support students in a format we have not trained for. Above all, I am excited to get to connect with students again, albeit in this radically different way, and that I have the opportunity to teach some essential skills and content with the time we have left.

Thanks all!

Ms. Gilpin