

# Westlake High School

## Mt. Pleasant Central School District

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March 25, 2020

Dear Parents and Students,

### **Routines:**

It has been about a week since my last communication and while many of us have settled into this new normal, I know it has been difficult for many. I find myself missing my morning bus routine and having the opportunity to say “hello and good morning” to my students. I miss the in-person conversations and hearing what’s new and happening in the building and with the kids. This time of year has always been an exciting time to hear from our seniors about all of their acceptances and where they might be committing and I miss that too. All of that being said, I am sure there are many aspects of your routine that you miss as well. I do believe that we will move past this time, that this will not become our “new normal” and that we will be more appreciative of everything in our lives as a result of this.

As difficult as this has been and may be in the short term, the importance of maintaining some structure and routine in the lives of our children is so critical now and will help them transition back to more formal activities in the future. We have been following the 2-hour delay schedule to keep the structure and flow of the day in place and allow for teachers to schedule class time meetings with students without fear of conflicting with another teacher. Having students up and connecting to their class pages at 9:45 allows for different sleep schedules while also maintaining that all important routine. Teachers will continue to follow the 10-2 time frame for answering emails and connecting with students who have individual questions and need individualized support.

### **Regents Exams & Quarter Grades:**

I want to answer several questions that have surfaced with regards to Regents exams, Quarter grades and completion of work. You may have heard that the Federal Government’s Department of Education has removed the requirements on State Departments of Education to report on standardized tests for this school year. At this time, however, NY State has not cancelled Regents examinations. Until we hear otherwise, teachers will continue to review important concepts and reinforce writing, reading and thinking skills essential to these exams and to our students’ overall learning. To that end, the completion of all assignments posted by classroom teachers is important to not only keep students engaged in learning, but also to build readiness for these exams.

The completion of these assignments will certainly be used to inform parents of student progress, to help students reflect on areas they need to continue to work on and will be used to inform teachers’ “grades” as we move through the remainder of Quarter 3 and into Quarter 4.

March 25, 2020

At this time, although there has been rumor of pass/fail grading, there is no move towards a pass/fail grade for 3rd Quarter. I have been in discussion with all teachers and guidance counselors and we will develop a system that will capture the value of work being completed right now by our students as well as future work should the extension of this distance learning go into 4th Quarter. To that end, I will develop a system, in collaboration with teachers, that highlights our student's best efforts and work and one that protects student transcripts for those who have stayed engaged with their classes.

### **Time Management:**

One of the important features for staying on the A/B Day Calendar is to help students manage the workload coming from their classes. As I mentioned earlier, the value of staying on this schedule is to help maintain a routine in students' lives. One aspect of that routine is time management. I have asked our teachers to be cognizant of when they are posting assignments, the length of those assignments and the due dates and to stay on schedule as if their classes were still meeting. This should help students manage assignments and due dates moving forward. Please reinforce at home the value of staying engaged with this work. As I had shared in my previous letter, all assignments will be marked in teachers' gradebooks as either "INC" if it is not completed or "P" if it has been satisfactorily completed. These gradebooks are viewable by parents through the portal.

### **SAT/ACT**

I know that many students have signed up for March and May SAT and ACT tests and those tests have been subsequently cancelled by their respective parent companies. We have been informed that your payment for these cancelled exams will be refunded. Please note that Westlake is a test site for the June SAT and there is still room to register, but it is limited. While we are all uncertain whether this test date will remain intact, it does provide a local option for our students. If you have any questions, please reach out to your guidance counselor. Mr. DiPaolo, the other counselors and I have been monitoring the dialogue in regard to how colleges will handle Fall 2020 applications for students who lost the opportunity to sit for the ACT or SAT. We will continue to update the Juniors on any information that comes our way.

I want to close on a positive note by reflecting on the conversations I have had with all of my faculty and staff over the last two days. As I checked in with each and every one of them they all shared with me the various ways they have stayed connected to their students, the uses of different platforms, the individual conversations they have had and their overall desire to stay in touch with their students. They had incredibly positive comments about how diligent and responsive our students, your kids, have been in these very unique times. More importantly, the resounding, underlying theme I heard was a desire to keep students engaged, support them in their learning and make sure they were OK. I have received these similarly themed messages from parents as well; positive wishes and words of support. I have known for a very long time just how special our community is, but in times like these it is even more pronounced how much we all are there for each other. If you need anything, please reach out to me or any other staff member. I wish you all good health.

Dedicated to excellence,



Keith Schenker