



**THE
MOUNT
VERNON
SCHOOL**

March 19, 2020

March 19 UPDATE: COVID-19

Dear Mount Vernon Family,

We are three days in since the School launched our Home Learning Plan. It has been great to see the First Day of School photos, Prefect announcements, birthday celebrations, Zoom meetings, and even college acceptances posted on social media.

So, how are you holding up? Home learning gives all of us, including myself, a greater appreciation for the faculty and staff at Mount Vernon. When you get a chance, email a couple of teachers today and thank them for their work. I know they would appreciate it in the midst of working from home and juggling their own family dynamics.

I want to take this opportunity to connect with you about Mount Vernon's approach to the Home Learning Plan. Some schools in Atlanta and beyond decided to transition to an entirely synchronous plan (students and faculty tuning in at the exact same time with each other) and others decided to implement an entirely asynchronous plan (students completing work at various times).

We leaned on Mount Vernon's Design Principles of Learning to influence the framework of the Plan:

- Relationships are Foundational for Learning
- Curiosity and Passion Drive Learning
- Learning Demands Interactive and Flexible Spaces
- Empathy Influences Learning
- Learners Apply Knowledge to Make an Impact

Additionally, School leaders consulted with other educational experts, gaining insights from international schools well in advance of our school closure announcement.

Based on Mount Vernon's mission and insightful successes and challenges elsewhere, we decided on a hybrid approach that includes strengths from both synchronous and asynchronous models. Knowing that families would be balancing work, school, and family at home during this time, we wanted learning schedules to maintain some flexibility. We imagined different families would have different constraints. Also, we wanted to make sure that students had time to see their teachers and classmates, so we implemented several video-call platforms such as Zoom. As we continue to move forward, the School will scale synchronous moments for meaningful, productive, and interactive learning experiences, throughout each division.

Since launching the Plan earlier in the week, we have experienced a great deal of feedback about the benefits of the flexible work schedule and the many opportunities for students to tune in to a real-time Zoom call for instruction, office hours, and time with classmates. Feedback from Middle School and Upper School students from daily check-ins has been invaluable for us to empathize with their learning experience throughout any given day. Parents, please continue to

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provide feedback to your respective division to improve the process. Please note that each division will be emailing you an important feedback tool next week once all students have lived through this process for several more school days.

At 3:00 pm on Friday, March 20, I am giving the staff permission to shut down their email. As for all of us, this transition has been quite the adjustment for them. They will be back on Monday as assignments will be posted by 7:30 am to begin a new week on this crazy adventure.

Finally, early next week, the School will decide and share with our community about extending the Home Learning Plan on this COVID-19 web page.

Stay safe. Stay healthy.

Dr. Brett Jacobsen
Head of School