

Communication to MacLaren Families, Extended Closure Plan

March 23, 2020

STRUCTURE AND FORMAT

For the platforms below, a computer, Chromebook, or similar device that has a camera is required—a smartphone works as well. Students do not need access to printers or scanners. Families who do not have devices, see below under *Supplies*.

Google Classroom

Upper School: All Upper School teachers will have their own “classroom.” This page will allow regular communication between the students and teacher; the teacher might post assignments or a video lecture. This platform allows for students to post questions or for there to be a classroom chat. Teachers will use this platform differently depending on the course. We will be sending parents step-by-step instructions on how to access this; we will email login passwords through our secure email system (the same way we send evaluations).

Lower School: All Lower School classroom teachers will have their own “classroom.” This page will allow regular communication between the students and teacher; the teacher might post resources or a video lesson. We will be sending parents step-by-step instructions on how to access this; we will email login passwords through our secure email system (the same way we send evaluations).

Weekly packet: In the Lower School, the virtual classroom serves as the repository for the weekly packet. This packet provides the primary means of moving the school year forward.

The packet is a PDF that is posted to Google Classroom by the classroom teacher every Friday for the following week.

Print the packet and complete as assigned. If you are unable to print the packet, teachers will direct the student to complete particular assignments from the packet on blank paper.

The packet follows this rough outline:

Plan: A daily outline of projects and assignments for the week: e.g., *3rd grade plan, 3/30/20 to 4/3/20.*

Activities: Worksheets, activities, problem sets, reading selections, project descriptions, resources, links to documentaries, directions to videos of lessons taught by the teacher—i.e., the meat of the packet, all the activities outlined in the plan.

Checklist: A one-page weekly checklist of tasks to be completed and initialed by parent/guardian. This both provides clarity around the question “Am I done?” and allows for the parent to have a single piece of paper that serves as the means of submitting work to the school. Depending on the week and the class and the grade level, the checklist may

serve as the sole “assignment” to submit for the week, or it may be accompanied by other assignments.

Parent guide: A one-page addendum for parents called “Parent guide to supporting your student this week.” This is not intended to be exhaustive. Depending on the needs of the lessons, it may contain a short script to help parents guide students along, some useful pointers about how to help students prioritize, or some guidelines on navigating certain online resources.

Lower School teachers may also use the Google Classroom to direct students to certain online platforms (Reading Horizons phonics, Math Playground, etc.) Note that these platforms will generally be *optional*; again, the heart of the Lower School work will be addressed through the weekly packet.

Zoom Classes

Upper School: Some classes will meet 1-2 times a week to allow for interaction. We will use Zoom, a video-conferencing platform. The priorities at this point are Literature & Composition, Humane Letters, and Math. Other classes may schedule Zoom sessions as well. We have built a schedule so that families with siblings can share devices at home; that is, we will not have multiple grades using Zoom at the same time. Links to join Zoom will be in the Google Classroom pages. Once students click on the link, it will provide simple instructions to download. This is free.

Students should treat these Zoom class times with the professionalism we expect at school; students should wear either a uniform shirt or spirit shirt and behave appropriately during the sessions.

Lower School: Note that there are no full Lower School classes being conducted. That said, teachers and TA’s will be exploring using the medium for small-group intervention sessions as well as optional social time for students. With guidance from our attorney, we are developing a document that will allow us to invite students to these groups.

SmartMusic

Upper School: Unfortunately, due to the timing of these closures, we needed to make the difficult decision to cancel Fine Arts Night on April 30. We don’t want students to lose the skills they have been working on all year, and so the orchestra team will be leading students through literature via a free, online platform called SmartMusic. Orchestra teachers will be sending out guidance on this through their Google Classroom pages. We understand that most bass players do not have an instrument at home; these students are exempt from orchestra practice.

Office Hours

Upper School: Some teachers will be available at least an hour a week for office hours in addition to the time available on the Google Classroom page. Availability is course-dependent. Teachers will confirm this through their Google Classroom page.

Lower School: Classroom teachers will be available two hours a week for office hours. Office hours can be conducted with students or, likely, with parents. These office hours can serve as a time for getting assistance in working through new material that poses a challenge. Teachers will confirm their hours through their Google Classroom page.

LESSONS AND CURRICULUM

We have pared back the curriculum to keep to bare essentials. What this looks like in each class is different. Our goal is to keep students learning and to be in a position to continue moving forward in the curriculum next year. Full guidance has not been released by the state yet in terms of instructional expectations. If further guidance requires us to adjust this plan, we will let families know right away.

While schools have been ordered to close through April 17, we have been directed to expect closure through the end of the school year. Clearly, this has not been announced yet, but know we are working with several contingency plans in mind. Meanwhile, we have heard to expect waivers for the instructional calendar this year. While this has not been finalized, if this waiver is granted, it would mean that we would not be required to move the school year into the summer.

Supplies

Please use this Signup Genius [link](#) to select a time that any family who needs to check out a Chromebook can do so, families can retrieve medicine at school, and **Upper School** students can come to get the rest of their supplies from their lockers. We have set up the timing and logistics of coming back into the building in compliance with recommendations from the Department of Education. **We have created the schedule so that everyone can get in the building tomorrow, Tuesday, in case Colorado Springs has a shelter-in-place later this week. Again, we need all Upper School students to come get their supplies.** Thank you for your cooperation as we allow Upper School students to get all of their supplies while we maintain social distancing.

- This is not a full locker bail-out, but Upper School students are encouraged to come get all remaining books, binders, and notebooks from their lockers.
- Most students also need novels or works of philosophy that were not handed out yet. These will be ready to be picked up in the lobby.
- Again, families who have medicine or medical supplies at school are encouraged to come get those as well.
- **Upper or Lower School families** who indicated that they do not have a computer or device at home can check out a school Chromebook at this time as well. **We have a limited supply; these devices are only for families who have no device at home for student use.** Again, the Upper School schedule has been crafted such that students are not scheduled to be on Zoom at the same time; we expect siblings to share whatever device is at home or the one device checked out by the school.

COMPLIANCE AND EXCEPTIONAL STUDENT SERVICES (ESS) SUPPORT

All students on an IEP, 504, or ELL plan will receive modifications, accommodations, and services as appropriate. The case manager will be working directly with these families.

ACCOUNTABILITY AND EVALUATION

Upper School: Many of the classes will continue to have some kind of assessment, be it through essays, projects, or tests. These will all be open note/open book. We are aware that working conditions in the home may not be conducive to working in a focused manner. Any assessment given is for the purpose of gauging mastery of the material or to practice skills being taught.

- *We are waiting for final guidance from the Department of Education about how to finalize grades this semester in light of these unusual circumstances.*
- Still, we will use grades as they stood at March 19 as the basis for the conversations around who might benefit in repeating a grade. The handful of families in that situation will be in ongoing conversations with the academic team in the coming weeks.
- Typically, we invite students to summer school now at quarter; all decisions around summer school are suspended at this point until we have further information.
- All state testing is suspended this year.

Lower School: The primary means of taking a grade is to enter the weekly checklist assignments as complete. Additional assignments (a Key Word Summary, e.g.) can be uploaded to Google Classroom by the parent.

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CULTURE AND COMMUNITY

We all feel keenly the loss of our community at this time. We will attempt to send out links to our new MacLaren YouTube channel in Constant Contact emails; these will contain videos that celebrate and uphold our culture—from mini Morning Assemblies to orchestral pieces, we want to keep a vision of goodness, truth, and beauty alive for all of us.

As noted above, Lower School teaching teams will be exploring optional times for students to gather online and interact with friends.

Finally, a word to our seniors and their families: we know you are grieving the loss of your senior year and probably have many questions and disappointments, from your final sports seasons, to the Spring Formal, to Graduation. We are brainstorming ways for you all to stay connected. At this point, Graduation is still scheduled for May 29. Should we need to move it to later this summer, we will keep you posted. While the state has not issued final graduation guidelines in these unusual circumstances, we have every hope of seeing you all cross the stage to receive your diplomas!

COMMUNICATION

We want to be clear in our communication without being overwhelming. In addition to the regular emails with cultural videos, we will communicate the next week's lessons and Zoom schedules at the end of each week through our Google Classroom. We will also continue to update our website with resources, and email families as critical information becomes available. Please be patient as the entire faculty is learning new online platforms along with the students.

Please do stay in touch. Let us know how you are doing, how your kids are doing, and how these platforms work. We know there will be a learning curve. If students continue to be engaged in learning, if they are using their time becoming the agents of their own education, then we can consider these weeks a success!