

Dear Mercy Families,

It is hard to believe that we are going into our fourth week of Distance Learning. I think our Spring Break comes at a wonderful time. There is no doubt that we all could use time to rest right now. Though we had the time to thoughtfully transition to Distance Learning, I know it has been a lot for our students and teachers. I cannot express enough how proud we are of how diligent your daughters have been with their studies- I hope you encourage them to truly rest over break. I encourage you to set some technology limits over Spring Break so your daughters are truly forced to rest and give their eyes a break from excessive screen time.

Below please find information on a number of areas. In last week's newsletter parents were invited to share feedback on our Distance Learning Program. If you have not yet had the time to complete this survey I encourage you to do so by [clicking here](#). We will be reviewing all of the feedback we receive from parents, students, faculty and staff. This feedback will guide our conversations as we consider potential schedule and program changes to meet the needs of our students.

Thank you for your continued partnership and trust. I am sure we share the same wish to return to Mercy to complete the school year. I am also sure we all recognize our need to be responsible global citizens by staying indoors and honoring the directives of our state and county. Know your daughters are in our every thoughts. Time and again I am receiving emails, texts, and phone calls from our faculty and staff asking what more we can do for our students and reiterating that we so deeply want our girls to be happy and feel loved during these difficult times. Your daughters are in wonderful hands and cared for on a personal level. Let's hold each other in our thoughts and prayers and remember that we are always one community in Mercy.

Thanks,



Natalie Cirigliano Brosnan '02

Remainder of the 2019-2020 School Year- On Tuesday a letter from State Superintendent Tony Thurmond stated, "Due to the current safety concerns and needs for ongoing social distancing it currently appears that our students will not be able to return to school campuses before the end of the school year." At this point it is fair for us to assume that we will continue with Distance Learning for the remainder of the school year.

We know that while this news likely does not come as a surprise, that it is disheartening to officially hear. We want nothing more than to bring our community back together on Mercy's campus and to celebrate the end of our 2020-2021 school year together in person. Please know

should there be any changes to this state decision that we will be prepared to return in any form we may be able to.

Please be sure to talk to your daughter about the reality of school remaining in Distance Learning through the end of the school year. Let's not forget every emotion is fair- anger, sadness, frustration, jealousy, hurt, etc. Our students will be grieving the loss of what they expected and what they had planned. Grief comes in stages, and they will likely go through these stages in the coming weeks and months. Let's be open to hearing them and to watching for signs of their emotions. Please continue to hug your daughters for us and let them know we are doing everything we can to care for them and to ensure that whenever we can return that we are able to enjoy some of those events and memories that they fear will be lost.

Should Mercy's buildings remain closed for the remainder of the school year, we will continue to send updates over the summer. Whenever restrictions are lifted Mercy will invite students to campus following proper guidelines so that students can once again find comfort in Mercy's beauty and in their classmates on campus. While we do not know when this day will come, we look forward to it more than you can imagine!

Spring Semester Grades: Many colleges and some high schools are choosing to change their grading for this semester to a pass/ fail grading system. We are very proud of how efficiently we transitioned to Distance Learning. Knowing that our students have been engaged in their coursework and that they have been working so hard, we will continue with our normal grading system. Should you have concerns regarding your daughter's grades please reach out immediately to her teacher and academic counselor. Please note no classes will be changed to pass/fail.

Spring Finals- We see how hard our students are working, and we are so proud of how committed they have remained to their studies. We are happy to share that any student with a 90% or above as of Friday, May 15th will be excused from her spring semester final exam under the following circumstances:

- All coursework is complete up until the day before review week.
- The final exam is given during finals week. (AP students will take all finals their teacher gives before the AP exam.)
- The grade must be unrounded and remain above 90% until the day of the deadline.
- This does not apply to projects, portfolios, papers, etc. It only applies to traditional final exams.

Teachers will confirm with those students who do not have to take finals.

AP Testing- Please [click here](#) for an update from CollegeBoard regarding the new AP Testing Schedule and System. This website shares information about this year's at home testing. Teachers will work directly with AP students to educate them of these changes and to prepare them for their exams. We also invite you to [attend this week's Parent College Counseling Support](#) meeting on Monday from 9:30-10:30AM. Ms. Ohanessian will be available during this time to answer any questions you may have regarding AP Testing.

Athletics Update: As you likely saw from the Schoology post on Friday, CIF and CCS have officially cancelled Spring Sports. We know your daughters are likely disappointed by this, and we share this disappointment as we love seeing our students thrive in athletics. We would like to thank all of our athletes for the tremendous commitment they put into their sport and into Mercy. Though it was a short season, our students made Mercy so proud. Coaches will continue to hold weekly meetings with teams. Should you have any specific Athletics questions, please email Athletic Director Charlie Dougherty at cdougherty@mercyhsb.com. Please know we will be in touch with Spring athletes to coordinate a uniform drop off in May to ensure that we receive all the uniforms back for next year.

Telecounseling Release- Thank you for your patience as we have taken time to learn how to best support our students' mental health while in Distance Learning. We absolutely want your daughter to be able to speak one on one with our Wellness Counselor, Ms. Phillips. Given the nature of Distance Learning we ask that all parents [read and sign this statement and release](#) regarding telecounseling. In order to ensure that all students have access to wellness counseling when needed, we ask that all families sign and return this document. You can use your daughter's iPad to sign this release through her Notability app and then you can email it directly to Ms. Phillips at jphillips@mercyhsb.com. You can also take a picture of the signed document and email it directly to Ms. Phillips.

Senior Activities: We invite all seniors and their parents to join us on Tuesday, April 7th at 5:30pm via [this Zoom link](#) so we can have a discussion regarding our senior class and their senior year. We know there are many questions, and we would love to have the opportunity to discuss what we know, what we have planned, and what we are creating to ensure our seniors get the recognition and experiences they deserve.

Financial Concerns- Should you have any concerns regarding paying tuition for this year or next school year, please email Lynn Beal at lbeal@mercyhsb.com. We are compiling a list of all families who reach out, and I will be contacting you via phone as a follow up. We know we are in very difficult times. We want to work with each family to determine how we can best support one another while keeping your daughter at Mercy.

Concerns with Increased Technology Usage- We share the concerns we have heard regarding the significant increase in time that students are spending on devices during the COVID-19 epidemic. Unfortunately, the reality is Distance Learning is our new normal and is essential to ensuring your daughters continue to receive a quality education so that they can be properly prepared for next school year and college. With that said, we continue to brainstorm as a faculty and staff how we can provide opportunities to decrease screen time. Below please find a message from Pediatric Ophthalmologist Dr. Kim Cooper who offers suggestions on how to prevent headaches, eye strain, and eye fatigue as a result of increased screen time:

When we focus on near objects such as screens for long periods of time, the ciliary muscle inside the eye has to stay contracted. If we do this for a long time, the muscle gets tired—like holding a ten pound sack of sugar in each hand, over your head, for a long time. **To relax this muscle, we follow the 20/20/20 rule: every 20 minutes, look 20 feet away, for 20 seconds. This will help prevent headaches, eye strain, and eye fatigue. Combine it with a stretch of your arms, a couple of deep cleansing breaths, and a good neck roll, and your body is ready to concentrate**

once more. Taking a break, at the passing period or lunch, to walk outside—or through the house if it is raining—will get your blood circulating and give your body and brain a break, too. Try to exercise a little every day to prevent couch potato syndrome! Wear your mask outside your home, wash your hands frequently, and practice social distancing. These 3 things will save the life of someone you love! Remember: We are not STUCK at home, we are SAFE at home! One cough can change your life.

Holy Week Liturgy- This Wednesday, 4/8, we will have our **Holy Week Liturgy** together as planned. Liturgy is from 1:30-2:30PM. All students must be in Formal Uniform. We welcome you to sit with your daughter to join us for this service.

This Week's Schedule:

Monday, April 6- Minimum Day 1:40PM Student Dismissal

- 7:10am - 7:30am • Morning Workout with Ms. CB
- 9:30am - 10:30am • Parent College Counseling Support
- 2:45pm - 3:30pm • Mindfulness and Movement with Ms. Stewart
- 5:30-6:30 Class of 2024 Welcome Night

Tuesday, April 7

- 11:00am •Campus Ministry Chat- led by Seniors
- 12:20pm •Campus Ministry Chat- led by Seniors
- 2:45pm - 3:15pm • Workout with Keri Sotak
- 5:30-6:30 Senior Family Meeting
- 6:30PM- Alumnae Board Meeting

Wednesday, April 8

- 7:10am - 7:30am • Morning Workout with Ms. CB
- 11:05 - 11:35am • Wednesday Wellness Challenge
- 12:30 - 1:00pm • Wednesday Wellness Challenge
- **Collaboration**
 - 1:10-1:30 Advisory Check ins
 - 1:30-2:30 Holy Week Liturgy
- 2:30PM- Dismissal for Easter Break (Students return to Distance Learning on Tuesday, April 19th)
- 2:45-3:30 Mindfulness and Movement with Ms. Stewart
- 5:30-6:30 Transfer Student Welcome Night