



SOUTH WINDSOR HIGH SCHOOL

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April 9, 2020

Dear SWHS Families,

I hope this communication finds you and your family well. As highlighted in Dr. Carter's communication this past weekend, families are experiencing a wide range of circumstances in light of the Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. The purpose of this message is to provide several important changes and updates with regard to Distance-Learning effective with the fourth quarter. We hope students, families, and teachers find these adjustments to be helpful during this extremely challenging time.

3rd Quarter Grades: We have now reached the end of the third quarter grading period for students. As we prepare to finalize third quarter grades, the following factors were taken into consideration:

- The last day of in-person classes was Friday, March 13
- Students were involved in distance learning from March 16 - April 9
- This was a period of adjustment for students, families, and teachers, with some great successes as well as some opportunities to change/improve some of our processes

In light of this, we have determined that the final third quarter grades for each of your child's courses will be the higher of either (1) the course grade in PowerSchool on March 13 (our last day in the building), or (2) the course grade on April 9 (the last day of the quarter). Stated another way: your child's third quarter grade will have either improved or remained the same since March 13.

4th Quarter Plan: As mentioned above, the transition to distance learning has been a fluid process, and expectedly resulted in some challenges for students, families, and teachers. While we have endeavored to make adjustments and improvements to teaching and learning in real time, we recognize that the present intensity of work for many students and teachers during these uncertain times is simply unsustainable. The preliminary feedback from the parent survey distributed earlier this week is in line with our own assessment of current circumstances. Therefore, the following guidelines and/or changes will be implemented for the fourth quarter, which begins on April 20:

- **Student Workload:** When we return from break, students should begin to notice a more manageable workload. The total number of weekly assignments for any given course will not exceed two. Please note, however, for students who are taking Advanced Placement, ECE, and/or articulated classes, the course expectations and workload will still remain as governed by those respective organizations.
- **Posting of Assignments:** During the third quarter, teachers were posting on the days their classes would have met according to the normal high school schedule. For the fourth quarter, the **high school bell schedule will no longer be utilized to determine the designated days for posts**. Instead, teachers will use one of two options for posting assignments for students:
 1. Post the assignment/activity for all their classes on Monday morning by 9 am; OR
 2. Post on the designated days for their classes. The designated days for the days of the week can be viewed [here](#).
- **Virtual Meetings:** As mentioned in an earlier communication, the platform being used by South Windsor Public Schools for virtual meetings is Google Meet. The SWHS "Virtual Meeting Times Suggested Schedule" has been updated to align with the new "Designated Days" schedule and can be viewed [here](#). In addition to Google Meet as a possible instructional tool, teachers will also be utilizing various other technology platforms and applications such as Google Classroom, Screencastify, or Edpuzzle to support students. SWHS students should be familiar with these platforms from their classroom experiences. However, we encourage students/families to consult the [Ed Tech Resources website](#) for additional information.

- **Feedback & Grading:** Teachers will provide students either individual or whole-class feedback on assignments, and grades will be entered under the category of “Distance Learning” in PowerSchool for the fourth quarter. If your child needs assistance or clarity with an assignment/activity or the earned grade, please encourage him/her to contact the teacher directly via email or preferred method as prescribed by the teacher.
- **4th Quarter Grades & Pass/Fail Option.** For fourth quarter assignments completed during Distance-Learning, students will earn grades as they have in the past, which will be entered into PowerSchool. At the end of the fourth quarter, these fourth quarter “distance-learning” grades will be incorporated into the final grade for full year courses or spring semester courses, as usual. However, due to the unique circumstances we are all experiencing, students will also have the ability to select a Pass/Fail for a course during an identified window of time in late May/early June. More information on this option will be provided in a future communication to families.

The Times We Are Living In: I recognize that many of our students remain concerned about their grades and what transcripts will look like for colleges and other post-secondary institutions, as well as a number of other items on their minds. While this is understandable, it is important to join me in stressing *context* with your children. Regardless of one’s generation, we are experiencing an unprecedented situation which is impacting educational institutions, businesses, and countless sectors of society. Post-secondary institutions will be mindful of these unique times and take them into account when considering applications, student performance, etc., especially since they have been directly impacted by this too.

To that end, I am including some helpful tips I provided in a previous communication and have added a couple more...

- **Mindfulness:** Having dialogue as a family about this “new normal” is helpful. We are all experiencing truly unique times.
- **Time Management:** During distance learning, it is important to avoid distractions like cell phones, TV in the background, etc. to optimize attention to school activities. Typically, this will result in a shorter amount of time required to complete the tasks themselves.
- **Breaks:** Incorporating breaks from assignments and technology in general throughout the day can be helpful.
- **Exercise:** Similar to breaks, incorporating physical wellness as part of the daily routine is important.
- **Social Distancing:** Please remind your children about the importance of social-distancing—it is critical for all of us, regardless of age, to practice this. It is a tough, but necessary sacrifice.
- **Stay Positive:** Find the positive—whether it was an academic accomplishment, sticking with fitness goals, or taking the time to reflect on what one is grateful for.

It is with this last point that I wish to close. I am grateful for the support of the South Windsor community during these tough times. I am also grateful for the students and teachers who have worked hard to adapt to a very different educational model—this has not been easy. I am also grateful for those who have shared a positive note with a teacher, staff member, or member of the administrative team, thank you as well. And I am grateful for those who are on the “front lines” whether they are a health care worker, grocery store employee, or member of public service; along with so many others, I take comfort in knowing we are surrounded by these real-life heroes.

I hope the April Break serves as a good timeout from distance learning and is an opportunity for your family to enjoy time together. Be safe and be well.

Sincerely,

Frank Rizzuto

Frank Rizzuto
Principal, SWHS