

April 6th, 2020

From: Mr. J. Edwards

To: Students in Mr. Edwards' Earth and Environmental Science classes

Re: How learning will continue for our class

Hi students,

Thank you for keeping in touch during this strange time. In this letter, I will try to answer and clarify some of the questions and concerns you probably have in the midst of these unexpected circumstances – grades, assignments, class meetings, and how to stay connected with our class. You might still have some questions, and this letter might even make you think of new questions. Please contact Mr. Edwards via email or Remind, and he'll help you with as much information as he has, as soon as can.

I have been trying to communicate any new information with you as I receive it, and I appreciate your patience as we have been waiting for official decisions to be made by school and state leaders. In any case, I will continue to let you know important details as I determine how they impact our class and your responsibilities. There will still be some details (and maybe changes) to come, but we are now ready to move forward into the "online learning" phase of our class.

First, let's clarify some "old business" from 3rd quarter: Last week, school and state leaders shared details about how students' grades would be impacted by the current COVID-19 school closing. This information has been shared in pieces through media and rumors, but we now have specific details to rely on. Based on these latest updates, I have some specific announcements for you:

Some important updates about assignments and grading for students in our class:

- **Students are not expected to submit weekly Current Event News articles for the past few weeks since school closed. Students SHOULD submit a News article for the 7th week of our class (was due by 11:59pm on Friday, March 13th) since that was expected BEFORE the school closing was announced. (If you did not submit that article, you can still do so for full credit. Use the online form, just like before.) Students are NOT expected to submit a News article for the 8th, 9th, 10th, or 11th weeks of our class (March 20th, March 27th, April 3rd, April 10th/Spring Break) since those would have been new assignments submitted during the school closure or Spring Break, between March 16th and now. These weekly News articles will start back up again next week, when the "online learning" phase of our class officially begins; the next News article will be due by 11:59pm on Friday, April 17th.**
- **All 9th-grade students who were earning a "passing" grade (60% overall or above) based on work assigned as of March 13th will earn a grade of "PASS" (P or PC19) for the 3rd quarter instead of a numerical or "ABCD" grade. As long as you have submitted all work for our class from 3rd quarter and Mr. Edwards has not contacted you to let you know otherwise, you can expect to see this final grade (P or PC19) to appear in PowerSchool for this course. (Your actual numerical grade will also appear online, but will only be used for teacher records, for now.)**
- **Final decisions have not been made yet about how grading will work for 4th quarter or for overall final grades for spring semester courses, for 9th-, 10th-, and 11th-grade students. As soon as those decisions are made, I will communicate everything you need to know. *For now, assume that nothing will change about how grades are determined.* We will continue with the same grading system that was shared at the beginning of the semester until we are given instructions to do something different. We are still waiting for directions from state and**

school leaders as to whether or not the Earth and Environmental Science NC Final Exam will still be expected.

- **Please be careful with information about school and grades that comes out online, via social media, or rumors... Your teachers will share reliable, up-to-date information with you as soon as we can. Patience and waiting for correct, complete information is really important in this unexpected situation. It is true that specific decisions were made by school and state leaders about final grades for Seniors expecting to graduate at the end of this school year. Those decisions only impact current, graduating Seniors, and do not have any impact on younger students in 9th, 10th, and 11th grades.**
- If students have any questions or concerns about these updates, please contact Mr. Edwards via email or Remind.

Now that we've discussed grades and how we will wrap up the work you did leading into the current school closure, we need to think about how our class will work moving forward: **The "online learning" phase of our class will begin the week of Monday, April 13th.**

Mr. Edwards will continue to provide learning opportunities, content, and assignments for students. Students are encouraged to use this unexpected unstructured time to take greater ownership of their own learning and engage in ideas that are valuable and interesting. The online activities that I will provide will include direct instruction, videos, readings, interactive online tools, independent research, and opportunities for students to consider and share their own ideas and perspectives. I will also work to provide direct feedback to students so they can understand the strengths and weaknesses of their learning in this new format.

Even though we will continue as if the grading system will not change (for now), we cannot pretend that how school works – classes, learning, working with teachers and other students – will not feel very different. Online learning is a new format for all of us, and it works differently than our usual face-to-face routine in the classroom. So, we will adjust our goals to match: **Our focus for the next few weeks (April 13th-May 15th) will be on learning as much as we can, staying connected to what we were working to learn before school closed, and looking for ways for each student to personally connect to what they are learning.** While grades will still be a part of our class, they will be a much smaller part of our class. Mr. Edwards' focus will be on your learning instead of your grades, and yours should too.

[Students can also choose to continue selecting optional independent assignments from the ideas Mr. Edwards previously shared on this same webpage (letter posted on our class website, March 18th). All of these are opportunities for students to continue learning, even outside of the formal structure of teacher's assignments and instructions.]

Here are a few examples of upcoming assignments we'll try during our "online learning" phase:

- By now (from the beginning of the semester through March 13th), students should have submitted 7 total Current Event News articles via the online form. (We cancelled the 3rd quarter "scrapbook" project that would have gone along with these articles.) We'll resume this weekly News articles assignment next week, when "online learning" officially begins. Students can go ahead and start looking for up-to-date News articles that they can read and evaluate for the next few weeks. These will be submitted via the same online form as before, and they will be graded according to the same expectations shared earlier this semester. (All of these details are still available on our class website.)
- Our class spent time before the school closure thinking about natural resources, how we use the natural resources available to us on Earth, and the impacts of using these resources unsustainably. How do we use these natural resources to produce energy that provides for our day-to-day activities? What are the impacts? Are we using our energy sources sustainably? This will be an important focus of some of our upcoming assignments. (*More details to come.*)
- The rest of our Earth and Environmental Science curriculum focused on the impacts of human actions on our natural environments. Each week during "online learning," we will focus on a different "sphere of Earth" and how humans impact it through our daily lives and larger patterns. This will include ideas like "What factors should humans take into account when they decide what to build in certain locations?" or "What are the specific sources of land, water, and air pollution, and how do these impact the way our planet's natural systems work?" We'll read some short articles, watch some video clips, and connect to

the weekly News articles students are finding to evaluate how our daily actions leave an impact on the world around us. (*More details to come.*)

Updates and further instructions will be posted on our class website starting next week. **Mr. Edwards will use Google Classroom (on online “Learning Management System” that almost all students are already familiar with) to organize materials and assignments for the “online learning” phase of our class.** If you have not joined our class’ Google Classroom yet, please sign in to your WakeID, click the “Google Classroom” icon, and enter the following code to join our class: [mni2f6c](#). If you’re having problems, contact Mr. Edwards for help.

Even though some teachers are inviting students to Google Hangouts meetings for next week, Mr. Edwards is *not* currently planning on holding “live” video classes (for now) for Earth and Environmental Science. However, **I will be available via Google Hangouts for “virtual office hours” every weekday afternoon from 1-2pm starting on April 13th.** Links to the daily “office hours” meeting will be posted on Google Classroom. New information will not be shared during office hours, so they are not required for any student to attend; Mr. Edwards will be available to answer questions or concerns during that time.

I hope you are getting yourself prepared to re-enter the school routine starting next week with online learning. Some of you have already been taking steps to pick up where we left off when school closed, and you have been working with your teachers to keep learning. **My hope is to be a resource for you to make good use of this unexpected time, and to be supportive of each of you, and not to overwhelm you with details, information, and work. Please let me know at any point if what we are trying is not working for you – we will come up with a solution that works for us all.** I’m excited about the opportunity this crazy, unfamiliar time is affording us to learn about new formats we can use and be successful with – **I hope you’re feeling positive too.**

If parents or students have any questions or concerns while we are away from school, please contact Mr. Edwards via email or Remind.

Stay home, stay safe, stay positive!

- Mr. Josh Edwards