

April 6<sup>th</sup>, 2020

**From: Mr. J. Edwards**

**To: 11<sup>th</sup>- and 10<sup>th</sup>-grade students in Mr. Edwards' Forensic Science classes  
(and 12<sup>th</sup>-grade students choosing to continue participating in the course)**

**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. 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.

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:

**Some important updates about assignments and grading for 10<sup>th</sup>- and 11<sup>th</sup>-grade students in our class:**

- **For students who did not present their individual "Famous/Important Case Research Presentation" before the school closing, please see the email Mr. Edwards sent you over the weekend (sent on Sunday, April 5<sup>th</sup>). Since this work is from 3<sup>rd</sup> quarter, it still needs to be submitted, as soon as possible. If you did not receive an email about this assignment but did not present before school closed, please contact Mr. Edwards right away for help.**
- **All 10<sup>th</sup>- and 11<sup>th</sup>-grade students who were earning a "passing" grade (60% overall or above) based on work assigned as of March 13<sup>th</sup> will earn a grade of "PASS" (P or PC19) for the 3<sup>rd</sup> quarter instead of a numerical or "ABCD" grade. As long as you have submitted all work for our class from 3<sup>rd</sup> quarter (*including your individual case presentation*) 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 4<sup>th</sup> quarter or for overall final grades for spring semester courses, for 9<sup>th</sup>-, 10<sup>th</sup>-, and 11<sup>th</sup>-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. Since Forensic Science includes a "teacher-made final exam," we are still waiting for directions from state and school leaders as to whether or not this 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 9<sup>th</sup>, 10<sup>th</sup>, and 11<sup>th</sup> 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 13<sup>th</sup>.**

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 13<sup>th</sup>-May 15<sup>th</sup>) 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 18<sup>th</sup>). 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, students should have finished reading the "crime novel" they selected at the beginning of the semester. Students will be asked to submit documentation (in whatever format they prefer) of their reading and understanding of the book (or podcast, or audiobook, etc.) to Mr. Edwards and then create a "book trailer" that outlines the storyline, the correctness of its representation of Forensic Science and investigation, and whether or not they feel others would want to read it as well. (*More details to come.*)
- News media and popular culture often represent Forensic Science at the scene of a crime. So how do investigators approach a crime scene and go through the process of surveying what could have possibly happened, what evidence might have been left behind, and what information can be determined from that evidence? This is the process we call "CSI" – crime scene investigation. Students will learn the steps of a reliable, effective crime scene investigation, how to document and photograph what is observed there, and how to identify and preserve evidence that has been left behind. (*More details to come.*)
- Students will be challenged to complete some independent research in order to learn the details of one particular type of Forensic evidence and then share that with the class. Students will learn from one another about the wide variety of physical evidence utilized in Forensic investigations. (*More details to come.*)

Updates and further instructions will be posted on our class website starting next week. **Mr. Edwards will use Google Classroom (an 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: **ffdbco6**. 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 Forensic Science. However, **I will be available via Google Hangouts for "virtual office hours" every weekday afternoon from 1-2pm starting on April 13<sup>th</sup>.** 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. Many 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