

March 18<sup>th</sup>, 2020

From: Mr. J. Edwards

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

Re: Learning during the current school closure

Hi students,

I have been waiting to contact you until more information was shared by state and WCPSS leaders about exactly how these days of school closure should work. While there are still questions to be answered, I now have some new details that allow me to make a better plan for us, at least until more information is shared. Since our current situation is continuously developing, things could change at any time and I will do my best to communicate with you with the best information I have.

**Three important announcements regarding assignments in our class:**

- **Students should NOT continue to collect and submit weekly Current Event News articles via our class website and online form. This has been a weekly homework expectation since the beginning of the semester, but this will now be put ON HOLD for the time being. This might change if we get new instructions from school or WCPSS leaders. *No weekly News articles need to be submitted and no credit will be given for articles that are submitted until further notice.***
- **The "Current Events News Articles Scrapbook" assignment that was recently discussed in class, and should have been due on Monday, March 30<sup>th</sup>, is NO LONGER EXPECTED of students. This assignment has been CANCELLED for now and *students should NOT spend time working to complete it during this time away from class.* If any student has already been working on this assignment, feel free to stop working and bring any already completed to Mr. Edwards when we eventually return to school.**
- **Mr. Edwards is using this time away from our usual routine to catch up on grading and organization, so students will likely see updates to their PowerSchool grades based on work that was completed and submitted BEFORE the school closure. *If you believe there is an error, or you have questions about the grades you see appearing there, feel free to contact Mr. Edwards via email or Remind. Also, if you notice an assignment is listed as missing, or you know that you have work that was due or checked before the school closure but you have not yet submitted (due to absence or not being complete), you can scan or take photos of the assignment (if you have it available at home) and email that to Mr. Edwards. He will update grades as best as possible, and you will definitely have a chance to communicate with him more specifically before any course grades are finalized. Any errors can be easily fixed.***
- **If students have any questions or concerns about these changes, please contact Mr. Edwards via email or Remind.**

Now, since our normal routine and lessons have been interrupted for the time being, we need to clarify what our goals for the next few days, while we're away from school:

- **The primary goal during this state-wide school closure is to keep our community safe, and to try to limit the health impacts and spread of COVID-19 as much as possible. Please stay home as much as possible – this is not time to hang out with friends, to go out on your own, or to celebrate. This is a public health emergency and we all have a part to play in protecting the most vulnerable people in our school and local community.**

- The second goal during this time away from our usual routine is to make sure students maintain the most important concepts and ideas that we have already learned about this semester. For our course, that includes:
  - *the Scientific Method,*
  - *the definition of Earth and Environmental Science and the different branches of the Earth Sciences,*
  - *understanding our planet as a “system of systems” as well as identifying the different “spheres” of Earth and how they are connected, including the anthrosphere, atmosphere, biosphere, cryosphere, exosphere, geosphere, and hydrosphere*
  - *important terminology for understanding and explaining how our planet’s systems function, including “environment,” “ecosystem,” “biodiversity,” “natural resources,” “climates,” and “biomes”*
  - *the definition and importance of the concept of “sustainability” and the impact of natural resource depletion on Earth’s natural environments*
  - *basic ideas of World Geography, like the locations of continents and oceans, and the major climate zones of Earth (the “tropics,” the “poles,” and the temperate zones), as well as the distribution of the human population across countries and cities around the world, and special environments like rain forests and deserts*
  - *important ideas about how maps are made and organized, including the problem of “distortion” and how to use latitude and longitude to identify locations around the globe*

A lot of students and families have questions about what they are expected to do during this time away from school. At first, we were told to treat this time as our rescheduled “Spring Break,” but that has since changed. So, let’s clarify Mr. Edwards’ expectations for students until we get more information: Mr. Edwards will not be asking students to complete specific assignments during this time away from school, and he will not be grading any work that students might choose to complete during this time. Until further notice, there will be no penalty or reward for continuing to complete schoolwork during the next few days. (This may change in the coming weeks, depending on how long we are away from our normal school routine.) However, students can use this time to independently refresh and reinforce the concepts and ideas we have already been learning this semester. Here are some ideas for what you might choose to do with your extra time away from class:

- Use online resources to review the Scientific Method and conduct another at-home experiment, like you did at the beginning of the semester. Since you’re at home for several days, maybe you could create an experiment using simple materials from around your home and watch how your variables change over several days or even weeks! Document your work by taking notes of your purpose, procedure, and observations; record data and measurements and take photos or video to show off to others when we get back to school
- Look over the list above of concepts we’ve already focused on so far this semester, and identify important vocabulary terms or ideas from those topics; create a slideshow or scrapbook of these ideas, their meaning, and their connection to how the Earth works as a “system of systems.”
- Read more current event News articles, including about the current coronavirus/COVID-19 crisis and think about ways these are affecting the different spheres on our planet, especially the anthrosphere
- Practice your World Geography facts with [these online games](#), especially the “World” section near the bottom of the page
- Read about important concepts that we will discuss later in the semester, including the geosphere, hydrosphere, and atmosphere by using [CK12.org’s awesome interactive, online Earth Science textbook](#). Chapters 3-12 focus on details of Earth’s geosphere, 13-14 focus on Earth’s hydrosphere, and 15-17 focus on Earth’s atmosphere. (Chapters 18-22 focus on the concepts we’ve already been discussing this semester and 23-26 are all about Earth’s place in Outer Space!) There are a few follow-up questions at the end of each section within each chapter; answer these questions on a Google Doc or on a separate sheet of notebook paper to show off what you’ve read and studied on your own.
- Read a Science-related book or story. There are many great options that are easily available online during the school closure: Check out [BookRiot.com’s list](#) or [GoodReads.com’s list](#) for recommendations!

**Please remember that these are NOT REQUIRED assignments and they will NOT be graded. *These are simply suggestions for how students can keep reviewing and learning independently* until we get more information about what the rest of our spring semester will look like.**

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