

March 18th, 2020

From: Mr. J. Edwards

To: Students in Mr. Edwards' Forensic 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 whose individual "Famous/Important Case Research Presentation" is scheduled during the days we are currently missing from school should be prepared to present on the FIRST DAY we eventually return to our usual school routine. If we are not scheduled to attend school as usual on the day of your presentation, you should be ready to present as soon as return. *You DO NOT need to submit materials to me digitally by your original date, or ahead of time; simply make sure you are ready to submit when we do eventually return to our usual routine.***
- **Students should continue to read their selected "crime novel" as expected, since this was an independent long-term assignment whose due date has not yet been impacted. *Whether you selected to read a printed book, read a digital book or e-book, listen to an audio book, or listen to a podcast series, you should still be making progress on this assignment toward our eventual due date of Tuesday, April 14th.* This might change when we receive new instructions from school and WCPSS leaders, but it has not changed for the time being.**
- **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 definition of Forensic Science, the work of “Forensic scientists,” and what Forensic Science “looks like” in action*
 - *the history and development of Forensic Science over time, and the important people, organizations, technologies, and representations that have influenced changes in Forensic Science over time*
 - *the definition of “evidence” and the many different types and ways to think about evidence and how different pieces of evidence connect to one another as investigators try to make sense out of an unknown situation or crime*
 - *introducing and becoming familiar a selection of laboratory techniques that are commonly used by professional investigators and scientists to analyze evidence that is collected from a crime scene or during a Forensic investigation*
 - *questioning and evaluating the authenticity of how Forensic Science is portrayed in popular media, including TV, movies, books, and the News media, and looking for examples of the concepts we’ve already discussed so far in different forms of media*

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 reschedule “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:**

- In addition to your selected “crime novel,” try out listening to a “true crime” podcast. There are so many great options: Check out [Vulture’s list](#) or [Oxygen’s list](#) for recommendations!
- Watch a crime-related TV series or movie. (Forensic Files is one of the most famous, and [there are tons of episodes available for free on YouTube.](#)) [*Warning: Be careful not to spend too long listening and watching stories about crimes and people harming other people; take a break every once in a while so you don’t get stuck with too much negativity.*] When you watch the episodes or films, document what you see by answering the following questions on a Google Doc or on a separate sheet of paper:
 - Summarize the story in terms of **motive, means, and opportunity**. What evidence do you see or was presented to support each of these?
 - What **types of evidence** do you see being left behind, discovered, and used in this story? How do you know? **Are there any patterns that you see** in how different types of crimes or mysterious situations lead to certain kinds of evidence, or how certain kinds of evidence tend to lead to a more reliable understanding of what actually happened?
 - How do you know the **information being presented here is realistic, or accurate**? How reliable do you think this version of the story is? How could find out?
 - Are there **other resources or versions of this story** that have been told? **What are the different perspectives, opinions, or sources of bias** that could affect our understanding of what really happened?

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