



# TUSCALOOSA ACADEMY

*Individual Attention. Maximum Opportunity.*

March 26, 2020

Dear students and families,

As whole portions of our society have shut down and we face unusual and often unsettling life circumstances, it is now that we need our school communities more than ever. Our daily life at school gives us much-needed structure, weekly goals, life aspirations, new skills and knowledge, and equally important – companionship and friendship. Tuscaloosa Academy teachers have been hard at work rethinking how to recreate many of these vitals aspects of school in our current remote reality. While we may be physically apart at the moment, we aim to find ways pull together as a community even more.

## Priority One

### Taking care of yourself / balancing other obligations

As you look to establish new routines at home, we recognize that challenges will arise, from childcare to responsibilities for family and friends to illness. We can lock arms and do this best together -- please ask for help from administrators and teachers as needs arise. Establish routines, give yourself time for physical activity, and take breaks from the news and social media.

### What we know today: March 26, 2020

- a. The middle school dance is cancelled
- b. Sports and after school activities are postponed TBD
- c. MS Field Day is cancelled
- d. All club competitions are cancelled
- e. We are PLANNING OUT TO April 9 with remote school (Good Friday is April 10 and still recognized as a holiday. We cannot think of a better time to celebrate Hope.)
- f. We will evaluate the school plan weekly
- g. We will have no 2nd semester exams (regardless if we return to our physical school or not this spring)
- h. Semester grades will be comprised of 3rd & 4th quarter grades = 50/50%



## How we prepare for remote learning?

Our transition to remote learning is in 2 phases so that we can move deliberately to prepare for this different way of engaging. I have created a middle school remote learning website to keep track of all of the latest news and give you a place to have your questions answered. Please bookmark it and check it regularly:

<https://sites.google.com/tuscaloosaacademy.org/tamiddleschoolremotelearning/home>

**Phase 1:** Action Phase (March 30-April 9) We will plan in two week stages.

- Classes begin Monday, March 30.
- All core classes (math, English, science, history, and language) will meet live virtually twice a week. Core subject area teachers will continue to teach new material and will grade assignments and take attendance.
- All electives are canceled for the duration of our remote learning phase. Instead, students are asked to join at least one club but may join as many clubs as they like. Clubs meet once a week and give students an opportunity to pursue their passions with weeklong challenges. These are spaces to build our community and celebrate the skills and projects we are building while at home
- We encourage all students to get 60 minutes of exercise a day. Our PE teachers are following the NFL Play60 model and will be creating a student vs teacher challenge!

• **Phase 2:** Phase (April 13 and beyond) Re-evaluate and update.

## What will students do during the period of remote learning?

Students will be checking their work on RenWeb/FACTS and working synchronously (live with the teacher) and asynchronously (independently) on course materials that teachers assign. Students will have worked assigned every day they normally have class but they will follow a modified rotating schedule for live virtual classes. Our goal is for each student to be able to interact with the core teachers and fellow students twice a week.

*Live virtual class schedule* →

Block 1	9 am-10 am
Block 2	11 am-12 am
Block 3	1 pm-2 pm

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Block 1	B	A	E	D	C
Block 2	D	C	B	A	E
Block 3	Clubs	G	Clubs	G	Clubs

Teachers will communicate assignment expectations and instructions for lessons on RenWeb and also by email as necessary. As always, teachers will be available to answer questions and to clarify instructions should a student reach out with questions. On our remote learning website, we have posted a variety of digital communication tools with help videos to get you started. If students encounter a technical problem, they should immediately tell their teacher and email Mrs. Woods: [jwoods@tuscaloosaacademy.org](mailto:jwoods@tuscaloosaacademy.org).



## Will attendance be taken?

Yes, attendance will be taken during these live classes, as usual. It is important for us that students remain engaged with their teachers and peers. We want to know if students are falling out of touch with the program or school more generally. Of course, things may come up that will make being present difficult or impossible for students, and we will need to find ways to help keep them engaged in the classroom community. We will take attendance the same way we do when we are in the building -- reporting absences through RenWeb's attendance portal. Attendance may be incorporated into the overall course grade due to the nature of the learning conditions. *If a student cannot join a live class, that student must email the teacher by email immediately so the teacher understands the nature of the problem, can provide support, and does not penalize the student.*

## Student support

Support of our students looks a bit different right now. Without the daily face-to-face interaction, we need your help letting us know when there are difficulties a student or a family may be facing. With your help, our faculty and administration will continue to seek new ways to continue the excellent academic and socio-emotional support that Tuscaloosa Academy is known for. We have found that phone calls and Zoom or Google Meet conferences can help bridge the gaps we have right now.

## Flexibility and Opportunity

These two words come to mind right now. First **flexibility**: we recognize that there will be quite a bit of trial and error as we figure out what works and what does not work. Students will not be punished if their technology or the Internet fails or if home life or illness creates unexpected struggles. We will have a good sense of humor and a lot of grace and will evaluate and adjust as needed. We do ask that you communicate your shifting needs so we are aware of them. Communication is needed more now than ever! Second **opportunity**: when else have we had a chance to hit pause on life and stay home for so long? While if you are like me, being stuck in one place after day can feel tedious, it also provides us with an opportunity to engage our curiosity, learn new skills, live life more slowly and perhaps deeply. I encourage you to create goals for yourself and to establish new pattern that are good for the body, mind and soul. My own immediate tasks and goals outside of getting remote school up and running include painting the inside of my house and attempting to grow a garden (*this last one is a stretch for me!*).

I look forward to hearing about your new hobbies and skills you gain in this time. Our TA Middle School Remote Learning website will highlight students and teachers in our community each week. Send me your pictures of what you are doing with your time, and I will post them on our school Instagram page and website!

Stay well,

A handwritten signature in cursive that reads "Brooke WB Peterson".

Brooke WB Peterson

Website: <https://sites.google.com/tuscaloosaacademy.org/tamiddleschoolremotelearning/home>

Follow me on Instagram: @tamiddleschool