



NOTES FROM SPARTAN LANE

John Thorsen, Head of School

jthorsen@athensacademy.org

March 16, 2020

Greetings from Spartan Lane,

Thank you for your patience, humility and support over the last several days. I am beyond proud of our professionals at Athens Academy and the good work they are putting into our program and their students. Linked below this section are several articles that I strongly encourage you to read and consider sharing with your children. One of these articles addresses the importance of following public health protocols in order to keep our community safe. This pandemic has altered our lives, and we need to respect what the professionals are saying. This is not an extended spring break but rather a time to make wise decisions for the greater good.

This will be a time memorialized for decades to come. Let's hope that we are remembered for the many good things which have happened and will continue to happen in the days and weeks ahead. This is a time when the best or worst in people will come out, and based on what I have seen we are in an enviable place on Spartan Lane. Our faculty and staff have been thoughtful about our community, reached out to support and lend a hand, and are currently focused on preparing the details of distance learning. This is not your normal *eSpartan*, and I hope you take the time to look at some of the helpful links. There are a few articles on how to talk with children about COVID-19 and the importance of social distancing.

For perspective, our current families visited at least 24 different countries over the spring holiday, and who knows what that truly means. I am not trying to sound alarmist, but I need to share the reality of how far and wide this community reaches. We have students and parents with compromised immune systems, and we need to do our utmost to care for every single person. The next several weeks are going to be difficult, but the health and well-being of the greater community is our number one priority.

A big part of our well-being is engagement. This is why school is open, but the campus is closed. I do not know what the days ahead will hold for us, but we are prepared to continue with teaching and learning. Schedules from each division will be coming out from them, so please be on the lookout for these. Our thinking is to ramp things up slowly over time. We cannot expect our students to jump right in and find success.

Continue to take care of yourselves as parents and caregivers: hydrate, sleep, eat, exercise, talk with friends and ask for help if you need it. Our school counselors are a resource to help support our students during these unprecedented times. They are here to help but cannot do so unless they are aware of issues as they arise. As you likely know, our counselors are Bob Sears, Carrie Olson, and Morgan Jones.

Our [pick-up schedule of materials can be found here](#) and is also linked below. Please know that this will be done quickly, efficiently and with only a handful of people allowed in spaces at one time. We need to practice the social distancing protocols and make good decisions. We ask that when you come to gather materials, that you simply empty out the locker and take everything with you rather than trying to sort through it immediately. It is easier that way and avoids future confusion and issues. Doors will be propped open, and several faculty/staff members will be on hand to monitor the situation in each building.

We encourage engagement with our school work. There are also tips on setting up a home work space for your children. If we are asking too much of your child and the work is causing stress or anxiety, please share with your respective teachers. On the contrary, if things are moving too slow and they need more, then please also share this with the teachers. We will try to strike a balance, but it is also a good idea to have a fun book to read now and then to detach from the work of school. It is also hugely important to think about exercise and staying active. This may mean a walk, a jog, or doing push-ups and exercises at home. I would discourage excessive video games and social media. At this time, we are also turning on various components of the Google Suite--settings which are normally turned off--so that we can offer more distance learning options. It is important you are mindful of your child's technology with these new settings. We suggest keeping the Chromebook or other device in a public place and monitoring where your child's online activity. Yes, perhaps a gratuitous comment, but we are trying to help.

Please continue to encourage good hand washing (20 seconds), social distancing, coughing into your elbow and, most importantly, staying home when sick.

There have been a number of questions about events and our calendar. We told our team this morning on our webcast that all events are postponed or cancelled between now and the end of April (see the Upcoming Events calendar in this *eSpartan* for more details). We hope to make some of these events a reality in time, but we are following the guidance of professionals. We value our community and the importance of traditions, yet we will not compromise and make unwise decisions. Thank you again for your understanding and support during these times and know that another message will be shared in one week, if not sooner. Keep it positive for all and stay healthy!

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "John Thorsen". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "John" and last name "Thorsen" clearly distinguishable.

John Thorsen
Head of School