

April 6, 2020

Dear Families:

I hope that this letter finds you well. As you know, schools have been closed for the month of April, and likely beyond, so I would like to provide some updates that may assist you with your planning over the next several weeks. Paul Cuffee School has changed the **April school calendar**, deciding to adopt with the rest of the state a revised April calendar. This Thursday April 9 and Friday April 10 are designated days off from school for all school children in Rhode Island, as a recognition for all of the changes we have had to endure, and to give students and teachers and parents a break. Additionally, April 17 is a professional day for teachers. There will be no distance learning on that day. Our school's teachers and staff will use the day to continue their planning for the duration of distance learning.

Since technology is a central component to our distance learning program we are depending on every student having an internet-connected device and home-based internet connection. I want to thank our technology department and building administrators and support staff for ensuring that every student has received a Chromebook and that every family has an internet connection. **We are at 100% technology access!** If, at any time, you are experiencing difficulty with your child's Chromebook, please check out our webpage at <https://tech.paulcuffee.org/>. For matters that require additional troubleshooting, contact your child's teacher or advisor. Also, telephone messages may be left at your child's school, just select the option to leave a message with the technology department.

Our teachers are providing distance learning experiences in a variety of ways, including posting lessons and assignments and grading work, holding lessons online both as recordings and live lessons, hosting office hours for help with assignments and for at-home learning coaches, and, most importantly, helping to continue their communities of learners. The students are showing up! I am very happy to report **excellent attendance** for distance learning thanks to the combined efforts of teachers, students, parents and caregivers. You're doing good work and demonstrating that you value education, now more than ever.

It is said that a parent is a child's first and most influential teacher. With distance learning we are asking parents and caregivers to serve as an "**at-home learning coach**," or a "guide on the side." When teachers assign work they are expecting that students will be able to complete them with approximately 80-90% success when done independently. An at-home learning coach provides the expectations and encouragement that a child needs in order to complete work independently.

At-home learning coaches can support learning by encouraging daily reading. Independent reading remains the most important thing students can do to advance their learning. Governor Raimondo and Commissioner Infante-Green have announced Read Across RI at Home for the month of April, and we are all encouraged to read every day. **Reading for pleasure** builds

vocabulary knowledge, exercises critical thinking skills, and promotes overall human development. With all of the time children have on their hands now is the perfect time to help grow readers. Your child's teacher or advisor has plenty of online resources for you to get excellent literature and nonfiction into your child's hands, and we are working on a system to help get more books into your homes. There are two types of people in this world- those who love to read and those who haven't found the right book. Let us help you find those books!

If your child receives **student support services**, as a student in special education or receiving multi language learner support, your child's teachers and service providers are working closely with you to assist you in your role as an at-home learning coach. Students receiving student support services often have challenges that make learning more difficult and their parents and caregivers may need special assistance in their roles as at-home learning coaches. Our distance learning program prioritizes the parent and teacher connection so that parents can have some extra support to assist their children with distance learning.

For any children who are experiencing particularly difficulty, including excessive anger or sadness; lashing out at siblings, friends and adults; having behavior problems; severe worries; or hurting himself/herself or others, parents are encouraged to call **Kids Link RI**, 1-855-543-5465 a free hotline connecting parents and caregivers to children's services, including treatment and counseling.

Regarding Trimester 2 **report cards** for lower and middle schools, we are working on providing access to those reports through the Skyward Parent Portal rather than sending them through the mail. Please expect to get more information from your child's teacher or advisor this week

I will continue to update Paul Cuffee School families via this format, in a letter from the head of school delivered from teachers and advisors through Google Classrooms. However, the School is still using the **Remind app** to get messages out to you early. If you haven't yet signed up for the Remind app, it is very easy to do. Text the following to the number: 81010

- For Lower School, type the following: @paulcuffls
- For Middle School, type the following: @paulcuffms
- For Upper School, type the following: @paulcuffhs

Finally, I know that there are a great many parents juggling work and demands of distance learning. I encourage everyone to just continue to do their best, whatever that means on any given day or time and remember that **together we will get through this**.

To the Paul Cuffee School parents who work as **first responders and healthcare professionals**: You are our heroes day in and out. Thank you for your vital contributions to the health of our community.

Sincerely,