

Coronavirus March 6 update:

Dear Overlake Community,

Amid these uncertain times with the coronavirus in our region, we had another full day will deliberate discussions, careful considerations, and always at the top of mind, the health and well-being of our community.

We started the day with a two-hour morning session to allow our faculty and staff to get up to speed with all the tools available to them to transition to a distance learning model in the event of a prolonged campus closure. From the moment the coronavirus came into our region we have been meeting daily, staying in contact with our local public health experts' guidance, and deciding to do what is best for our overall community.

There are no known active cases of the coronavirus in our community. However, one area of particular concern for us is the people in our community who identify as being "at risk" for contracting COVID-19. Wednesday afternoon, the King County Department of Health provided a series of recommendations for people over the age of 60, people with immuno-compromised systems, people with pre-existing health conditions, such as diabetes, and those people who are pregnant. Their professional recommendation is that this group of people should not be in close contact with the public. We have more than 30 people working at our school who fit that category, which is a quarter of our employees. Not having these employees on campus would make it challenging for us to keep school open. Additionally, given the cascade of closings in the past few days – North Shore School District, University of Washington, as well as companies like Microsoft and Amazon requesting that their employees work from home - added to the growing factors we considered in making it necessary for us to close the campus.

Therefore, we are making the difficult but necessary decision to close our campus starting Monday, March 9 and begin our distance learning model Wednesday, March 11. While our campus is closed, please note that this includes all on-campus events. However, we are awaiting guidance from WIAA in regard to our athletics, speech, and debate programs and will communicate on those programs when we know more. The all-school musical, *Seussical*, will go on this weekend, as the last show is this Sunday.

What does this mean to our community? It means students will continue to have school just in another way – *O²* (Overlake Online!). We have been working with our faculty to get them ready to conduct distance learning. They will be using Canvas and Microsoft Teams primarily to conduct virtual classes. Thankfully our faculty have been working with Canvas for several years and are comfortable to leverage the functionalities of this application. A virtual class schedule has been developed and will be shared with our students. Below are the various schedules. Please note that the first week differs from the second. The expectation will be that students should expect a full instructional day for their classes every week.

- [5th Grade week one](#)
- [MS-US week one](#)
- [5th Grade week two](#)
- [MS-US week two](#)

We are fortunate that we have an experienced teaching and learning team that has supported our faculty for several years, and that we are able to leverage those relationships and expertise at a time like now to make this as smooth a transition as possible. I am also grateful to our faculty who I know will do the best to continue to provide an excellent education beyond the classroom walls.

Another major decision amid the coronavirus outbreak is to cancel Project Week this year. After cancelling the international trips earlier this week and looking at any other trips involving air travel, we were faced with having many students without project options. We also learned that a number of our community partners for projects, such as schools and nursing homes, requested that we not send our students during this time. Given the timing of Project Week amid all this uncertainty, we made this difficult decision today not to have Project Week this year.

All of this news is uncharted territory for us. This will not feel comfortable for any of us, and yet we feel strongly that students need a level of routine in their lives. It is my hope that we can provide some level of normalcy to their day, albeit quite different than anyone is accustomed to. We ask parents and guardians to join us in providing a sense of normalcy as well. (Please refer to the parent resources available on our [coronavirus webpages](#).)

We feel especially bad for our senior class who has experienced a very abnormal Overlake senior year. We will be looking for ways to make this up to them in some way possible when we return to campus.

So, to recap, our campus will be closed beginning Monday. We will begin teaching our students from a distance beginning Wednesday. On Friday, March 20, we will re-evaluate our situation amid the coronavirus outbreak to see whether we reopen our campus on Monday, March 23. During this campus closure, I will continue to reach out to share any pertinent news with you.

In the meantime, take care of yourself. Practice all the health safety measures our public health officials have recommended and reach out to us with any questions and concerns. We are all in this together. Now more than ever is the time for our community

to hold close to our values and to one another. Thank you again for being part of our community during these extraordinary times.

Warmly,
Matt