

March 20

Dear Overlake Community,

At the end of this very full and uncertain week, I hope this weekend you have a chance to regroup, recharge, and reconnect with those closest to you. I find that in stressful times, drawing upon the strength of our families and communities closest to us provides the support we need to endure what is currently the new normal.

Thank you all for providing us patience and goodwill as we begin our new, virtual world - Overlake Online. Developing a distance learning model of teaching is a challenge we never thought we'd face in this way, much less for such an extended period of time. Our students have been exceptionally resilient through all this. As I watch my seventh-grade students navigate this new world, I am inspired by their willingness to embrace this new virtual world, which is asking them to take on more responsibility for their learning. It has also taken away what they crave the most, which is connection with each other in physical spaces.

I also recognize the burden our faculty has taken on. I have on more than one occasion mentioned that we are trying to change a tire while the car is moving. If you asked a group of people to attempt to do this, most would not accept this challenge. The faculty here have and although this was a full and tiring week for them, they have all given their best and ensured that the student experience continued. I could not be prouder of the work they have done.

When we moved to online learning, we realized that whatever we started with would change and adjust based on what we learn. As we have just finished the first full week what we need to do is to survey our faculty and our families on how this week went. Having this data will help us as we make appropriate changes to Overlake Online. Therefore, it is critical that you complete this short (10 questions) survey that we will send out this weekend.

As you know Project Week was canceled this year. As a result of canceling all of the projects, our business office and our Project Week director are working to unwind the projects we committed to. We are in communication with airlines, hotels, tour operators, and insurance companies, all with the goal of getting refunds, ticket flexibility, and credits. After we work through all of this, we will provide better clarity on deposits and refunds later this spring.

I am planning to hold another Town Hall meeting this Monday, March 23 from 11:30-noon. If you had an opportunity to join us at our last one, the format will be the same. I will provide a brief overview of the status at Overlake and then open it up for moderated questions. [Click here for the online meeting link](#). If you can't make that time, we will post the recording on the webpage: overlake.org/coronavirus.

Finally, from the parenting front. A small secret about our family – we have never had a gaming system in our home. Over the last nineteen years we have often fielded questions from our two sons on “why we don't own one.” At one point one of our son's made the case that he was a social outcast because he did not have one. We held strong through the yearly arguments, tears (from us) and unhappy teens this decision generated. This week that changed - having two teens at home daily with limited interaction with their friends, Susan and I agreed to purchase an X-Box. I can't tell you the amount of joy our younger son feels. We also learned from our older son that he and his roommate already have one in their room!

I hope you are able to get out this weekend and, while practicing social distancing, enjoy some of this outstanding weather we have. Being with family and being part of this community continues to strengthen me. I am so thankful to be an owl!

Warmly,
Matt