

GAHS

Gramercy Arts High School

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Pamela Mudzingwa-Makina, Principal

We're committed to building a strong, equitable, and purposeful scholarly and artistic community that prepares all students to succeed in a college of their choice, and beyond.

April 12, 2020

Dear fellow members of the Gramercy Arts High School Community,

While the last several weeks have not been easy, we have kept going, and will keep it going. Words cannot begin to express how extremely proud I am of how we have come together as a school community. I know that many of us are hurting and we are facing great personal challenges related to finances, health and family. This pandemic has truly forced us all to reconsider how we live our lives and to appreciate the mundane routines we once had.

As a school community, let's take time to thank all our parents and guardians who are essential workers. During our Zoom parent meeting, I have seen parents calling in while they are on the job. Your acts of heroism are inspiring and courageous. As our students continue to remain home, parents have taken on the additional roles of being teachers, counselors, and at times deans themselves. This is not easy. As we reach out to the different families we hear of personal challenges but also success stories of how continuing to be flexible and adjusting routines works best. A parent shared how she has her child waking up at 9:00 a.m., with an hour lunch break and then she has free time after 2:00 p.m. Another parent shared a schedule that includes time for yoga and mindfulness practice to ensure that their son is practicing self-care. Students have also shared starting virtual hangout groups with their friends. A student sent me a picture of a bag that she crocheted. A parent who remembered our crocheting initiative reached out offering to donate yarn and crochet hooks to students who need these. A parent offered to help with parent outreach. Another parent offered to teach an art class. I share these stories because when I hear them they not only brighten my day but reaffirm the greatness that lives within our school community. Please, keep sharing.

Although the school is continuing to work remotely, the commitment and care that we have for excellent outcomes for all our scholars remains the same. All teachers are giving this more than hundred percent of their effort. We have had to learn to use new technology quickly because we want what is best for our students. We have received feedback regarding workloads and we are reconfiguring on our end and this is part of

the reason why we are now providing time for students to catch up and will continue this practice going forth. Based on your feedback, teachers have increased direct instruction time so that students have more direct human interactions while engaging in learning. Since Remote Learning is new for all of us we ask that you keep providing us with the feedback that you have been providing; we are committed to enhancing this experience, especially since when we are going to be doing this for a while longer.

On Wednesday we will be hosting a meeting for seniors to brainstorm ways to celebrate senior year and acknowledge this momentous moment in their lives. While the timing of this pandemic is unfortunate, we will not let this prevent us from celebrating the class of 2020 as soon as we can gather together as a school community. Yesterday all seniors received a survey to submit questions that they have ahead of time to ensure that we provide complete and accurate information and also for us to share where things are still not clear. We want to be transparent and collaborative in developing innovative solutions to overcome some of the limitations we currently face.

Finally, we have met each challenge as a team and I am confident that we will come out of this more unified than before. In the spirit of community and unity, I invite you to participate in next week's community building activities that range from learning to cook, making Tik Tok videos, to writing thank you letters to our essential workers. The schedule of events is attached. I thank you for all you do and for loving our students. Your support and faith in the school provides me with the strength to push through. Together we are Gramercy Arts High School and we have got this!

"And as we let our own light shine, we unconsciously give other people permission to do the same. As we are liberated from our own fear, our presence automatically liberates others." - Marianne Williamson