



VILLA MARIA ACADEMY HIGH SCHOOL

EMPOWERING YOUNG WOMEN SINCE 1872

March 24, 2020

Hello, everyone.

I do hope this finds you and your families well. While we try to carry on with “business as usual”, your health and safety are of paramount importance over everything. With Governor Wolf’s announcement yesterday that the opening of all schools will be delayed another two weeks, Villa Maria Academy High School will not return to in-school classes until Tuesday, April 14 at the earliest. The information here will describe what our Virtual Villa days will look like effective this coming Monday, March 30. It’s important to remember that “the school building might be closed, but school is not!”

Letter Days through Easter break

The letter days will align as follows (we know this does not conform to our current April calendar):

Monday 3/30 = A-day

Tuesday 3/31 = B-day

Wednesday 4/1 = work/planning day

Thursday 4/2 = A-day

Friday 4/3 = B-day

Monday 4/6 = A-day

Tuesday 4/7 = B-day

Wednesday 4/8 = work/planning day

Thursday 4/9 through Monday 4/13 = Easter Break.

We will all hope and pray that we will be back at school come Tuesday, April 14 which is an A-day. We would then be back in step with the April calendar as Ms. Harkins shared it with all earlier this month.

Maintaining Villa’s community spirit

We all know the strength and value of our Villa community. Our teachers, staff, and students look forward to seeing each other every day and interacting with one another. How do we continue to capture that when we are not able to return to school together?

Each day will continue to start with morning prayer. Sister Regina and perhaps the other Sisters in the Convent will be video-recording morning prayer for us daily. This will be posted for students in Schoology each morning. Ladies, we ask that you take a few moments to start each day with our prayer. This will include the birthday “shout outs”, just as we would do if we were in school together. Ms. Harkins also is working with the Student Council on ways the student leadership team can support remote community relationships.

Structure of the school day

In having school from home, you are encouraged to create a “homeschooling space” in your homes if possible. Somewhere away from the news, TV, the busy-ness of the home. A dedicated space in which you can focus. If that’s not possible, perhaps use earbuds to block out some of the noise around you.

In delivering our courses remotely, there will be a structure to our days, following the letter day schedule noted above. Every morning, you can expect an e-mail from each of your day’s class teachers (via Schoology) that will set forth for you the work for the day. You can expect homework and assignments as usual.

The daily time schedule for classes will be as follows:

BLOCK 1 = 8:30 a.m. to 9:30 a.m.

- Period 1 ... 8:30 a.m. to 9:00 a.m.
- Period 2 ... 9:00 a.m. to 9:30 a.m.

BLOCK 2 = 10:00 a.m. to 11:00 a.m.

- Period 3 ... 10:00 a.m. to 10:30 a.m.
- Period 4 ... 10:30 a.m. to 11:00 a.m.

BREAK FOR LUNCH ... maybe do a Google Hangout with your lunch friends!

BLOCK 3 = 12:00 p.m. to 1:00 p.m.

- Period 5 ... 12:00 p.m. to 12:30 p.m.
- Period 6 ... 12:30 p.m. to 1:00 p.m.

BLOCK 4 = 1:30 p.m. to 2:30 p.m.

- Period 7 ... 1:30 p.m. to 2:00 p.m.
- Period 8 ... 2:00 p.m. to 2:30 p.m.

What you can expect of class

The goal is to make the remote delivery of our classes as legitimate and as credible as possible so that grade credit can still be earned by our students (as opposed to Pass/Fail). However, we realize that life at your homes might be a bit crazy with everyone at home. The same is true of our teachers’ homes. Therefore, we are not anticipating that every one of your daily classes will be online for your entire class at the designated time. Teachers have been given a high degree of flexibility when it comes to use of your class’ time and the platform with which to have class. Some will like the Conferences platform in Schoology. Others might find that Zoom or Google Hangouts better meets the class’ needs. Teachers have been asked to convey this information as well as connection instructions with their students. Please be watching for this information from your teachers.

As you all soon will find, it is very tiresome to be “on camera”, online all day! Teachers will be keeping this in mind as they craft the daily lessons for you. You will see a greater use of more hybrid styles to your classes:

- Perhaps you will hear from your teacher in the morning via Schoology and will be told you are to be online during your designated time for attendance purposes and ask questions or hold a class discussion.

- You might hear from your teacher that he/she wants all of you online when your block begins. He/She will teach a brief lesson, take attendance, then send the students on their way.
- Perhaps your teacher took Spring Break to record some lessons and post them in Schoology for you. You might be told to watch one of them and then be online during your designated time for attendance to be taken and for students to ask questions, discuss, do practice problems, etc.
- You might be told to simply e-mail your teacher during your designated class time (for attendance purposes) and then go work on an assignment.

Obviously, Study Halls will not meet. This will be down-time for you. All Phys. Ed. and Fine Arts classes will meet (including music lessons). Please await instructions from your teachers. Junior and Senior College Guidance classes also will meet. Seniors, I am in conversation with Mrs. Denning and Ms. Jenkins to see if we can continue with your personal finance class in a remote platform. More information will be forthcoming. Future due dates of the remaining personal finance quizzes will be adjusted accordingly.

The key will be flexibility. This is uncharted territory for all of us but I am confident that it can work.

Expected “school day” attire and deportment

Remember that for most of your classes, you will be on camera and we expect you to act as such. While you do not have to be in your uniform skirt and tights/leggings, **we do expect you to be in a Villa top/sweatshirt/etc.** Out of uniform violations will be reported as they always are when we are at school. Pajamas or other “leisure wear” is not acceptable.

Be mindful of where you are in your house for being on camera for class. Lying in bed would NOT be an appropriate place! The key is to remember you are on camera and can be seen! As we transition now to a remote delivery of our classes, I ask that you also remember a few aspects of our policies regarding electronic equipment and usage (Page 30, *Student Handbook*):

- “The use of cameras, including video cameras, is prohibited during the school day unless permission has been given by an instructor or administrator.”
- Any student attempting to photograph, record, and/or videotape a teacher or another student, perhaps for posting on any electronic media site without explicit authorization to do so, will be subject to discipline as per our policies.

School is still in session and you are still Villa students, ladies. You are still expected to conduct yourself with integrity and maturity. Ms. Thompson’s office is “still open” and violations of Villa Maria’s code of conduct will continue to be adjudicated.

Attendance/Absentee policy

Villa Maria Academy High School’s attendance procedures remain in place with the following modifications:

- If a student is unable to attend her virtual class meetings, she must e-mail her teacher(s) and copy office@vmahs.org within 15 minutes of the start of the class’ session. This will be a documented absence. This includes instances in which it becomes apparent that the student’s

technology is not working properly and she is prevented from joining an online session, or if a student is ill and cannot participate in class activities that day.

- If a student is not present for an online class meeting and does not e-mail her teacher and office@vmahs.org within 15 minutes of the start of the class' section, it will count as an unlawful absence.
- A student who is absent from class must still provide a note from her parent, guardian, or physician with a satisfactory explanation for her absence within 3 days of her return to classes. Notes may be sent to office@vmahs.org.
- If a teacher does not hear from you during your designated class time, or if you do not sign on, the teacher will be reaching out to Mrs. Castelluccio and Mrs. Griffith at office@vmahs.org just as he/she would do were we in school.

Faculty/Staff availability

Each day, teachers will be available 8:30 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. to reply to student e-mails and perhaps even meet with students online via Google Hangouts, Zoom, or any other platform with which they are comfortable (a virtual Advisory period!).

Our Counselors will be available 8:30 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. for online meetings/check-ins with students.

Administrators, too, will be available these same hours to offer support to faculty, staff, students, and parents as needed.

Tips for student success in remote classes

1. If at all possible, create a “homeschool space” for yourself in your home. Perhaps the under-used Dining Room, Living Room, or the basement? Somewhere it’s quiet, where you can focus. If necessary, use earbuds to give yourself some quiet.
2. Turn off the news or TV when doing your work. Set yourself up for success and create your best learning environment!
3. Be mindful of your presentation if you are on camera – your attire, location, and behavior.
4. Get into a routine of waking up a certain time each day.
5. Watch for morning e-mails of reminders. Do this first each day (along with watching the morning prayer)!
6. Be engaged in your class. You will find that taking classes remotely requires more effort on your part: more effort to focus, more effort to participate. But participation is necessary for remote classes to work well. Therefore, participation will count even more now than ever.
7. If you have RFT a certain period/block, then you still have that! Use the time to get some fresh air, read, nap, snack.
8. And perhaps the #1 thing to remember about a remote delivery of courses... Things are going to go wrong and not work well at times. There will be “technology fails”. When this happens, we are going to need your help in troubleshooting those tech problems at home. Most of the time, these fails will be out of the control of the teacher and he/she won’t be able to help very easily. Parents

and students need to understand this. We are all in this together, doing the very best we can, and we need help and support from the families. We all need to remain calm and positive through this!

As I mentioned earlier, this is uncharted territory for many of us. Distance education and correspondence courses, however, have been successful since the late 1700s in educational circles. It might not be as wonderful and fulfilling as it is to be all together on campus at Villa, but it can work! Our teachers have been very positive and have embraced the opportunity to stretch their skills into a remote delivery of their classes. We are committed to continuing to deliver an exceptional education to you ladies ... even if we have to do it remotely. While it might be a bit of a bumpy ride at times, we will get through this ... together. As our morning prayer states, may we “realize we are better together”. And that we shall be!

If there is anything at all we administrators and technical support staff can do, please don't hesitate to reach out to us. In the meantime, you and your families are in my thoughts and prayers each day.

With best wishes to all for peace and good health,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Linda Henderson".

Ms. Linda Henderson
Director of Curriculum and Instruction