



Dear Excel Families,

As 2020 draws to a close, we are incredibly grateful for your continued support, patience, and perseverance through this incredibly challenging time. We are writing to provide an update on a few remote school procedures and to let you know that more information will be coming shortly about our plan for returning to in-person school.

We entered this year of remote learning with a flexible camera policy and the hope that as students became more comfortable on Zoom, more would turn on their camera. We prioritized flexibility in our policy because we did not know how long remote learning would last and we were unsure of the impact of cameras on class engagement. Our policy to start the year was to encourage, but not require, that cameras are turned on.

Three months into the school year, we have more information from teachers, families, and students about the impact that cameras being on or off has on students' engagement and learning. To improve the student and teacher experience, we are launching an adjusted camera policy, and **starting on January 4th, 2020 students will be required to have their cameras on** and be present on screen when a teacher is teaching or working with students in the Zoom space. While the new policy will be that cameras are on, if you would like to opt your student out, please contact your Dean of Students.

There are also **two changes to the schedule for after winter break**. First, we will be **moving WIN to after lunch**. We hope that this shift will have a positive impact on student engagement during WIN and provide a much-needed break from ZOOM after a long morning. Second, we will **increase Focus from 2 to 4 days/week**. We believe shifting WIN to after lunch and increasing Focus time will make the end of synchronous school time more clear and support increased attendance and asynchronous work completion. Due to the shift of Focus time, the **end of live instruction for the school day is now 2:30 pm Monday-Thursday and 12:15 pm on Friday**. Period 4 will continue to run from 2:45 to 3:45 to support opportunities for small group instruction.

We appreciate your understanding and flexibility as we continue to navigate a school year that looks very different than we expected.

Sincerely,

Your Middle School Heads of Schools