

# WARDLAW + HARTRIDGE

Pioneering. Thinkers.

March 16, 2020

Dear Wardlaw+Hartridge Community,

As you may have heard, Governor Phil Murphy has announced a mandatory closure of all schools in New Jersey. We support these measures to contain the spread of the novel coronavirus and assure the health of others.

We have been preparing for this disruption over the last few weeks. Please go to [whschool.org/coronavirus](http://whschool.org/coronavirus) to access our webpage regarding the school's response to the coronavirus. In the left column, you will find a section entitled Distance Learning, which provides information about how we will transition to this format and about what you can expect as we do so. If we do move to an online format, we will share a division-specific distance learning overview near the end of Spring Break.

Moving to an online version of W+H poses a number of challenges for us, our students, and you. These vary by age level and discipline, by the varied learning styles of students, and by family. Though our means of attaining our goals will change, our educational aims remain the same. I know I speak for the faculty in saying that moving online offers opportunities to try new strategies and to think differently about pedagogy. In the long run, we intend to use this opportunity to find ways to enhance our teaching.

As my son's college converted to online classes, the posts of parents in an online forum became rife with anxiety as well as useful suggestions for one another. I know this will not be easy for anyone, and frustrations may arise. Once Spring Break ends and our Distance Learning begins, if you have concerns regarding class assignments or how your child is responding to the online teaching, please share those patiently with the teacher. If you have concerns that are broader, share them with your child's advisor (in Middle and Upper School) or teacher (in Lower School). You can also reach out to the school counselors, learning specialists, or Division Heads.

This is a time when the W+H community will prove its quality and value in new ways. We will lean on one another in multiple ways, each according to their need. Teachers, administrators, and representatives from the Board of Trustees and the Parents' Association will reach out to students and parents on a regular basis, and I encourage you to share whatever challenges are arising for you. Together, we can all lift each other.



A WORLD-CHANGING PREP SCHOOL SINCE 1882


I am inspired by the words of Rabbi Yosef Kanefsky, writing recently in *Forward*:

One of the brand new terms that has entered our daily conversation is “social distancing.” It is shorthand, as we know very well, for the practical physical precautions that we all must take in order to protect ourselves and others. But I’d humbly suggest that we use the term itself sparingly, if at all. Language is a powerful shaper of thinking. And the very last thing we need right now, is a *mindset* of mutual distancing.

We actually need to be thinking in the exact opposite way: Every hand that we don’t shake must become a phone call that we place. Every embrace that we avoid must become a verbal expression of warmth and concern. Every inch and every foot that we physically place between ourselves and another, must become a thought as to how we might be of help to that other, should the need arise.

As we go forward, not knowing how the spread of COVID-19 will affect us, let us be doubly sure to be patient and kind, to realize that all of us will make every effort to find the best ways forward in uncharted waters, and to recognize that we are sure to make mistakes. Let us show the true, generous, and resilient spirit of our school community and work together to thrive in challenging times.

Best regards,

  
Andy Webster  
Head of School