



Dear Parents and Students,

We are excited to share with you that our teachers and staff have had an incredible week designing and planning educational opportunities for our students. We strive to ensure that all students have access to essential learning standards during this unconventional time. During our Professional Development, teachers worked on distance learning plans that will be shared with you on Friday, March 20th with learning opportunities beginning on Monday, March 23rd. We want to update you on plans for the next three weeks during our extended school closure.

As you know, the school will be closed from March 17 through April 3rd, leading into our Spring Break with a return to school date of April 14. These are challenging days, yet let's be reminded that challenges also present opportunities. We are excited to be able to share with you our current plans for engaging our students in distance learning and offering all students the opportunity to access learning during these times. Our staff is committed and sees it as imperative to ensure opportunities for student learning and engagement during this time.

To help with the implementation of remote learning, we have been exploring different options through technology. In addition to the continued use of Google Classroom, our staff and students will use a distance learning platform called Google Hangout. We will be monitoring the implementation of this new learning environment and make adjustments accordingly.

Please be familiar with the information below:

**Weekly schedule:** (starts Monday, March 23rd through Friday, April 3rd):

We know that each family is tackling unique circumstances so teachers are providing lessons, with embedded supports and links, that students can navigate at their own pace throughout the day. Students have flexibility and may attend to any learning at a time that works best for the whole family. Some teachers will be using Google Classroom to review student work and provide feedback and others will be sending home packets. Most students are already familiar with and comfortable with these platforms.

Our focus will be on English, Language Arts, and Math while embedding our amazing Core Knowledge curriculum when possible.

### **Teacher office hours:**

Each Tuesday and Thursday, beginning March 24th, all teachers will be live on Google Hangouts with office hours from 1:00-2:00. Your Child's teacher will be sending an invite through either Bloomz or your Child's Gmail account. This is a time to connect face-to-face with questions or clarifications. Of course, students can reach out virtually in other ways with questions they may have. Using Google or Bloomz, teachers will also be able to provide feedback to your child.

### **Next Steps for Parents & Guardians**

In order to support students and parents with this media of learning, our team wanted to provide resources to help you navigate these platforms. We realize that it will take some time and additional support to make this happen, but we appreciate your flexibility and most importantly, your commitment to your child(ren). Please know we will have technology support available to you, and teachers will be holding Office Hours to provide time to ask questions and clarifications.

Please see the following resources to help you navigate these tools that teachers may be using to access Distance Learning. Teachers will send additional information or be available to help guide you with any additional tools they may offer.

### **Technology tools:**

*Google Classroom:* Our teachers and students have been using this for a few years now and this may be the primary tool for some grade levels to utilize primarily 5th-8th grades. While students should be relatively proficient with this platform, please reach out to your child's teacher if you are having difficulty accessing their drive.

### **[Parents Guide to Google Classroom in 2020](#)**

*Google Meet:* is a new tool for our staff and students, but a great option for our teachers to open up a meeting in which students may join at the same time if they choose, and the teachers can see and interact with our students for the purpose of continuing the personal connection we value so greatly. It is important for our students to feel connected. Teachers will be using Google Meet as a platform for Office Hours every Tuesday and Thursday from 1:00-2:00.

### **Appropriate use of Google Hangout:**

The students seem very excited to begin using Google Meet as several of our teachers have received emails asking, "When we are starting?" As a reminder to our students, the iPad/Chromebook devices and its apps are to be used for educational purposes only. We ask that families talk to students about how and when they should use their school devices.

For IT issues on Sherman Thomas Charter School devices, please email [ipena@mystcs.org](mailto:ipena@mystcs.org). When emailing, please provide your child's name, school, and grade. This will allow a speedier response from IT. Please be as detailed as possible with your request.

For Android phones

[Hangouts Meet](#)

For Apple phones

[Hangouts on the App Store](#)

**Special Education:**

If your child receives special education services, you will receive a separate letter on the day of curriculum pick up.

**Access to campus:**

The campus will be closed Starting 3/23/20. However, someone will be answering phones from 9 am to 1 pm M-F. If after these times please leave a message on the school voicemail and this will be checked on a somewhat regular basis and calls will be returned as possible. As always your teacher is available on Bloomz or through email.

Thank you for partnering with us during these unpredictable times. It is important that we work together, respectfully with patience, as we have an evolving situation. We are in this together to best support our students, families, and staff.

Warm regards,

Tera Napier

Deputy Director

Sherman Thomas Charter Schools