



Middlesex

David J. Beare
Head of School

Dear Students and Parents –

Even a month ago, few would have predicted that Middlesex, for the time being, would be migrating to an online presence. The physical Middlesex campus is still here, of course, and becoming more and more beautiful as the grounds crew proceed with their preparations for full-on spring. That's important. But the Middlesex of the mind, body, and heart will need to live in hundreds of different locations in the coming weeks.

This is entirely possible.

In a profound way, Middlesex is us. Getting started on Middlesex online will return students and faculty to familiar and accustomed patterns of scholarship, community engagement, and the mutual relationships of care, accountability and creativity that characterize great learning environments. For this, we do not need a building. If great teaching and learning can take place in the public spaces of ancient Athens, then certainly it can take place in the modern electronic realm. There is a true freshness to this process – almost as if we are embarking on a new school year. Indeed, Middlesex online will open up avenues for learning, collaboration and connection that we may have missed, or discounted, before this time. I believe that there is great promise in the unexpected, and that is where we are. We will embrace it.

That is not to say that this new way of being Middlesex comes without a cost. We regret the temporary loss of the face-to-face interaction of students and teachers, teammates and coaches, and our friends. We regret the temporary loss of Antonio's omelets or an unlimited supply of goldfish and chocolate-chip cookies. I will miss saying good morning to you – although you should watch for something each day on our new online headquarters, "MX Remote." For our seniors these losses feel particularly acute. But we must, as Doug Worthen reminds us each week in Chapel, practice a sort of "kind receptivity" to whatever comes our way. We must respond to reality, and not what we wish was true, and that is where being MXers comes in: Regardless of what circumstance brings us, it is a beautiful day to play the game. Let's get going.

In this document, you will find important information about how we will start the process of online learning come Monday, and how online Middlesex will look very much like "real" Middlesex. It *is* Middlesex, just online. Classes, advisor meetings, fitness challenges within teams, affinity groups, clubs, chapel, performing and visual arts, high expectations for behavior (on and off-line) and scholarship – it is all here, and will continue to be built out as we do this better and better in the coming weeks. We will remain flexible and make adjustments as needed. We will be in this together, and we must be – there will be no better illustration of the concept of "known and needed" than the coming weeks.

With best regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "David J. Beare".

David J. Beare
Head of School

Middlesex Online Learning Guide

Advisor meetings

Advisors and advisees will continue to have weekly meetings. As always, those meetings will be arranged at a time that is mutually convenient to both the advisor and the advisee. It may be that the best time falls outside the academic day. Meetings should be allotted 25 minutes and all meetings will be conducted by phone or on the RingCentral platform. In addition to individual meetings, there will be periodic meetings of advisor groups for the purposes of making announcements, transmitting information, or creating space for small group discussion. For all meetings, whether individual or group, students should be dressed appropriately and in a location conducive to a formal meeting.

Schedule

We have redesigned our block schedule to accommodate online synchronous learning, creating 50-minute meetings for classes organized by block. Only classes that are credit or half-credit courses will meet in this schedule (e.g. there will be no Writing Workshop meetings or Dialogues meetings). All times are Eastern Daylight Time. Please note that there will be a modified schedule for the opening day of School on March 30th.

Middlesex Weekly Synchronous Schedule*

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	
	extra help sessions (international)	extra help sessions (international)	extra help sessions (international)	extra help sessions (international)	extra help sessions (international)	
9:30 AM	A	E	B	F	D	9:30 AM
10:20 AM						10:20 AM
10:30 AM	B	F	C	A	E	10:30 AM
11:20 AM						11:20 AM
11:20 AM	Extended Break	Extended Break	Extended Break	Extended Break	Extended Break	11:20 AM
12:30 PM						12:30 PM
12:30 PM	C	H	D	B	F	12:30 PM
1:20 PM						1:20 PM
1:30 PM	D	A	E	C	G	1:30 PM
2:20 PM						2:20 PM
2:30 PM						2:30 PM
	extra help sessions	extra help sessions	G	extra help sessions	H Arts Use Only	
4:00 PM			3:20 PM		3:20 PM	4:00 PM
<i>Times = EDT</i>						<i>Times = EDT</i>

**Saturdays will be available for community programming. For more details, refer to the "Meetings outside of class" subsection below.*

Modified schedule for Monday, March 30th

As we welcome students back to school, **we will have a modified schedule for Monday, March 30th**. We will begin with an advisor group meeting at 10:00am EDT on Monday. A block will run from 11:30am to 12:20pm EDT and B block will run from 2:00pm to 2:50pm EDT. We will proceed with the published synchronous schedule for the rest of the week starting on Tuesday, March 31st.

Monday March 30th

10:00 – 11:00am	Advisor Group Meetings
11:30am – 12:20pm	A Block
2:00 – 2:50pm	B Block

Online conduct

Despite our physical distance, we all share the privilege and responsibility of maintaining the goodness that defines our community. Life online allows for many opportunities to learn and interact, and we must remember that the school values of Honesty, Gratitude, Courage, Kindness and Respect, as well as the standards outlined in the Handbook still govern and guide us in all that we do. With that in mind, please review carefully the following additional code of conduct for online learning.

Code of Conduct for Online Learning

1. While all school rules and standards apply and are important, we will all have to consider with great emphasis what is articulated in the major school rule of Respect for Self, Others, and Community, as well as the content of the Acceptable Use Policy and the major school rule on Honesty & Integrity.
2. All participants must log on to their device and begin the class session at the start of class and remain active for the duration of the session. Attendance is expected, and attendance will be taken each class period.
3. All participants must be seated at a desk, table or other workspace. If this is not possible, students should do their best to create an environment conducive to academic study.
4. Food is not permitted during class time.
5. All participants must be wearing clothing that is appropriate for class. Participants' backgrounds (or background images) must also be appropriate for class and not a distraction to other students.
6. Communication standards are just what they would be for an in-person class. All participants should only communicate with each other publicly, and in the context of the class. There must be no backchannel texting or chats, and all communication must occur through the platform established by the teacher.
7. All participants may not make unauthorized audio or video recordings, nor take unauthorized photos or screenshots.
8. Mobile devices and any other technology not prescribed for use by the teacher should be turned off or set to silent mode prior to each class and should be kept out of the student's reach.
9. All participants should not be doing other tasks while online for class.
10. As you would in an in-person class, keep conversation topics relevant to material being discussed.

Getting started online

Joining a video conference class

For the first meeting in each class, the teacher will generate an invitation for each class video conference that will appear as an email invitation to each class member and on each class member's MX Google calendar. The link to the class will be embedded in the email and calendar; the student will simply click on the link and they will join the video conference with the teacher and classmates. To attend subsequent classes, students will connect through the "Meeting ID" that pairs with the teacher's particular course. The "Meeting ID" will be posted prominently on each course's Google Classroom or Moodle page. Classes must start and *end* promptly so that teachers and students can be prepared for subsequent meetings.

Meetings outside of class

Advisors will reach out to each advisee to schedule a weekly one-on-one conversation by phone or video conference. These meetings will occur during mutually convenient times, as they do when school is in regular session.

Only on rare occasion, and with permission of the Academic Office, will a teacher schedule an academic session after 4:00pm EDT or during the "extended break" block that runs through the middle of the day. We have reserved the extended break, afternoons, evenings and Saturdays for other community programming of the School. The Deans' Office will publish a schedule weekly on our online schoolhouse, MX Remote, with opportunities to join these many important community activities that make Middlesex special. MX Remote will serve as an internal hub for school announcements, events, and other online resources. All students, faculty, and staff will have access to the MX Remote webpage.

Asynchronous classes

With students located around the globe, we recognize that some students will not be able to attend courses synchronously. If there are any students absent from a class meeting, that class will be recorded and posted for students who were absent to view asynchronously as necessary. If all students are present, teachers will not record the class. Students who download and view class videos should delete those recordings from their hard drive after viewing the video to prevent overloading the memory on their computer.

We have reserved time before 9:30am EDT to allow students who are 11 to 14 hours offset from our synchronous schedule to meet with teachers for conversation, questions and follow up.

Affinity groups, clubs, athletic teams and community programs

We very much want to foster the continuation of affinity groups, clubs, and other community programs that support student engagement. Mr. Sport is working with affinity group leaders to establish the meeting schedule for as long as Middlesex continues online. The athletic department is developing workouts and challenges for individuals and teams. **Any club, group, or team wishing to hold a weekly or recurring meeting should fill out a [Calendar Request form](#).** Each week, the Deans' Office will publish a schedule of activities and meetings on MX Remote for students to connect with the Middlesex program and each other. All meetings will require a faculty host / participant.

Spring calendar

Classes will meet each week Monday to Friday using the synchronous schedule. Each week we will publish a companion calendar on “MX Remote” with invitations to students to join in community programming (for example, mindfulness or “Politics and Pizza”) outside of class time.

Whether or not we return to school on the Middlesex campus, seniors will complete the Middlesex program before May 25th while freshmen, sophomores and juniors will finish their school year on May 29th as on the originally published Middlesex calendar. We will have classes on Monday, April 20th (Patriots Day), and no classes on Monday, May 25th (Memorial Day).

Attendance

Student attendance in their classes is expected and required. A student not present for a synchronous class meeting will be marked absent.

International students

The parents of international students should be in touch with the Deans' Office by April 3rd regarding any class blocks for which the time zone prevents the student from regularly attending synchronously. These students will be expected to view recordings of classes they are unable to attend and teachers will create alternative opportunities, as appropriate, for those students to connect in person with the teacher. Again, we have marked out the morning from 8:00 a.m. EST to 9:30 a.m. EST as time when those sessions can take place.

Absences

When possible, in advance of a student’s absence, a parent should email the Deans’ Office at deans@mxschool.edu with the reason for the absence. Students who experience connectivity problems or other technology issues that cause them to miss a class should have a parent email the Deans as soon as possible with the reason for the absence.

Any student who misses a synchronous (live) class for any reason is expected to keep up with the class by watching the recorded video of the class to ensure they remain current with the class and the material.

Grading

Grading philosophy

The nature of an online course is significantly different from courses that we teach in person. While we are confident in our ability to conduct quality learning online, it is much more challenging to fairly and precisely assess student *mastery* of a course. Every child is managing not only the exigencies of each class, but complications connected to many uncontrollable aspects of their experience. From a spotty wifi connection, to different time zones, to possible family illness, the student experience will be differently impacted. With these variables in mind, and after extensive research into the policies and adjustments of peer schools and colleges – including college admission offices across the country -- we have decided to use an alternative nomenclature for grades during the period of online learning.

Online grading structure

While we are in an online medium, courses will be graded as High Pass, Pass or Fail. This gradation will signal that the semester was outside of our usual grading and programmatic practices while still allowing us to describe student work with some nuance. Should the period of online learning extend to the end of the semester, spring semester transcripts will also use this terminology. We are confident that this modified grading vocabulary will best serve students in this very unusual landscape even as we understand the importance of describing the unique talents and qualities of each of our students. The School will develop guidelines for teacher comments at the close of the spring semester to make sure that we capture the many qualities of student work and engagement during their courses in the spring of 2020.

Communication, Tools and Materials

Remote communication platforms

Teachers will use email, phone calls, RingCentral, Google Classroom and Moodle to communicate with students and families. Per usual Middlesex policy, Middlesex personnel should not text nor share information on social networking platforms with students or parents of students.

The three primary tools that Middlesex will use to connect with students are RingCentral Meetings (a Zoom technology video conferencing platform), Google and Moodle. We expect that students will check their Middlesex email accounts daily as that will remain an important tool for communication. That said, **teachers will house syllabi, assignments and materials on Google or Moodle and will not email students information directly. Students are responsible for connecting to each course on one of these two platforms.**

Course books

While many students have their books with them, other students left their texts on campus at the beginning of March Break. We have packaged and shipped many of those books to students' homes based on the survey information we collected earlier in the break. Departments have researched resources that are available online for free and -- good news -- many of our texts can be accessed electronically at no cost. Teachers will direct students to these resources to make sure that students have access to books and texts for their courses.

Permission to Record Classes and Use Class Materials

Because of logistical challenges related to serving students from different geographies and time zones, teachers will often record classes for access at a later time.

Policies and guidelines for class recordings:

- Before recording, the teacher will inform the class that the meeting will be recorded solely for use by students who are absent from the meeting. A student who would prefer not to give permission for that recording should mute their microphone and turn off their video feed. They will still be able to see other members of the class, and to hear the discussion. It is important to note that the recording will only be available to members of the Middlesex community.
- Students who choose to mute their microphone and turn off their video feed may be called on by the teacher to provide a written response during class.
- Class recordings will be treated by teachers as confidential material solely to support the educational purpose of their class.
- The intention of recorded classes is not to keep a long-term repository of academic content; it is to enable asynchronous access to class materials and discussions to all Middlesex School students.
- No other unauthorized recording of the class is allowed.
- Class recordings are property of Middlesex School and disposal of those recordings will be governed by the Middlesex School Document Retention Policy. Inappropriate distribution of recordings, along with other violations of the Acceptable Use Policy, are subject to a discipline response from the School.