

Stephen F. Austin High School

“Tradition Of Excellence Since 1881”

AUSTIN INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT



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September 9, 2020

Dear Austin High Students,

As the beginning of the school year is officially underway, we are all adjusting to the new formats of virtual learning. It's important for us to take it slow, not be too hard on ourselves, and accept that this way of learning in virtual school is new for all of us. For some, learning from home has advantages.....easy access to snacks and the restroom, no commute time, and accessing courses via BLEND from the comforts of our personal spaces. However, the advantages of in-person learning seem to outweigh these comforts.

What we've all realized during this pandemic is that the social aspect of schooling is important. Having a *home away from home* with friends and teachers who care, know you as an individual, and look out for your best interests is critical to your emotional well being. Even though we are not able to see you in person each day, we are here for you. It's important to remember that Austin High is your home, even from afar. We have this saying...**Loyal Forever**. *What does that mean during a pandemic?* Well, it means we stay loyal to ourselves and each other by continuing to do our personal best, even in the face of adversity. It will take all of us working together to create the best virtual learning experience possible. This means holding each other accountable for appropriate behavior in Zoom classes. We will not accept Zoom bombers who choose to act in ways unbecoming of a Maroon. If you know of someone who is making poor choices via Zoom or social media sites, let us know by completing this [form](#). Zoom Etiquette classroom rules for our school can be found [here](#).

As we adjust to the COVID pandemic, we look to the positives in our circumstances. As your principal, I encourage you to stay involved, stay focused, and use this time to reflect on the value of your education. Your teachers are working hard to provide robust virtual learning experiences. The teachers and staff miss you. We can't wait to see you in person. As health conditions improve, you will start to hear about plans for reopening in-person learning. *How can you help?* Remember to follow the 6 feet social distancing guidelines, wash your hands for 20 seconds, and wear a mask. These important requirements will make a difference by limiting the spread of the virus and contributing to a move from [stage 3 to stage 2 in our local community](#).

While we wait to see how the virus impacts our community over the next couple of weeks, know this....**we care about each of you**. We want what is best for you. We want you to continue to learn and grow in unique ways. If you haven't joined a club yet, *what are you waiting for?* A list of clubs and organizations can be found [here](#). This is a great way to stay involved, meet new friends, and try something new.

In order to stay prepared for classes, your teachers have posted required school supplies on their BLEND sites. *Do you need help purchasing school supplies?* Click [here](#) to request help. We are distributing school supplies September 17 and 18 to those who need them and are unable to buy them on their own.

As you move into the next couple of weeks of virtual learning at Austin High, focus on the positives. *What areas of virtual learning work for you? How are you making the most of your virtual learning school experience? What are some ways virtual learning has helped you engage in coursework?* By reflecting on these questions, you will start to see that virtual learning isn't all bad and the experiences are still preparing you... just in a different way. I sincerely hope you have a great first week of school. We have much to be grateful for...health, happiness, and a caring school community (even from afar). **Loyal Forever!** ~Ms. Taylor