

My Move Online

My plan for the rest of the year was set...until it wasn't. Life in Michigan changed on March 20 when we had our last day of school. My biggest regret from that day is not getting a picture of all of us together; it just didn't feel like it would be our last day for the year. I was thinking it was our last day for a while.

In our district, for the first two weeks, we provided "learning opportunities." No grades and no due dates. The goal was to connect with kids, to give them support, to give them ways to reach out if they needed help, and to give them these learning opportunities.

Below are letters and links that I have given to my students during our move online. I am hoping that this language can give you ideas as we move through this unique time together. You can take whatever you find to be helpful and leave the rest. No attributions necessary. I organized this with the most recent date being at the top of the page.

Learning opportunities at a glance include:

- Borrowing from the New York Times and their morning meetings where they read a poem, I sent students a poem hoping that it would give them a moment of pause and peace -- or maybe just a minute away from news about coronavirus.
- I went back into our website archives and pulled out a bunch of human interest stories, reviews, opinion articles, etc., Basically, I was looking for anything that would serve as a model for what students can do now. I also wanted students to know that 10 years from now, their work will still be read. I want students to know now more than ever that their work as journalists matters.
- I asked students to go back on their camera roll and find a photo from the past week that captures a moment where they were happy - or as happy as happy gets right now. Then, I asked them to write a caption so we could compile these together. It's important right now for people to see each other and to hear stories about the new lives we are all living. Journalism can bring connection that teens, and adults, need desperately.
- My favorite assignment is always a letter. I start and end the year with it, and before we went on spring break I pulled it out again. In these letters, I find out so much about students. And, right now, students need to write to us. These letters can inform our practice as we move forward. We need to make sure that we are addressing students' most important needs. Luckily, as journalism teachers, I think that we are equipped to do this!

Link to Google Form Student Survey April 11: <https://forms.gle/wUzD9HtYNntXXLjc9>

Letter and Distance Learning Plan for April 11

Dear Journalists,

I just finished writing "Communicator in the world of Distance Learning" so you all have a clear idea of what is going to happen moving forward. That document will follow this letter.

However, you know I work best in letter form. So, here goes. I have to say that reality is sinking in for me. I miss being in our classroom: working, eating pizza, long production hours...all of it. I love being in our room with all of your brilliant minds and energy creating that good feeling that is so important to find in life. I miss that so much. Yesterday, I met with print editors and the decision was made to go ahead and create a Senior Edition 2020! I felt that excitement of creating something. After all, that is what we do: we create.

As we move into this distance learning time, I want you to think about what you want to and can do during this time. Not so long ago, we took a trip to the Newseum in Washington D.C. Here is a photo of us standing in front of it:



Inside of the museum's doors there was a quote that I want you to think about during this time: *"Journalism is the first rough draft of history."* How can you take that quote and bring it into your work? We have the chance right now to create journalism that endures — that others can look back onto as they try to understand what it was like to live through this unique moment in history. Remember that zooming in on individual stories is a powerful way to understand bigger issues. As a group, we have the tools, the intellect, and the drive to make these stories happen.

I look forward to connecting with you, seeing your work in our world, and figuring out how we can best use this time together. I am so grateful that I know you and that we are working together. At a time when the world can feel like a lonely place, journalism has the power to bring people together.

Please let me know if you have any questions or ideas.

Love,
Tracy

Communicator in the World of Distance Learning

As we head into the District's Continued Learning Plan, let me emphasize three things that are particularly important to me as we continue with class:

1. Your well-being and mental health are the most important thing
2. Structure in our day is almost always good for us.
3. Nurturing our curiosity and continuing to learn for the sake of learning is always a good thing.

That said, let me explain how I see us moving forward with class:

1. Each week, on Monday and Wednesday, I will post an activity or an assignment on Google Classroom. You will complete each one by Friday and get credit for them.
2. Each Friday, you will respond to me via GoogleForm where there will be either a check for understanding or a reflection assignment/question.

Please, help me by turning everything in through Google Classroom. Thank you in advance.

If you do these things, you will Pass the class.

A couple more things:

****I will be posting 18 total assignments on Mondays and Wednesdays. In order to Pass (60% completion rate), you only *have* to complete and turn in 10. However, most of you will be able to complete 90-100% of the work, and I would encourage you to do so! We have worked hard this year, and working to the best of your abilities during this time can provide a sense of structure and fulfillment. Your work in this class should always be meaningful to you and to our world. I am here if you ever want to brainstorm ideas or if you just want to talk!

****We are in this together, friends. Please **help me** by responding to my assignments, and then let me **help you** by posting reasonable work and being understanding if you're not in a place to concentrate very well or if you need help completing something. If you are unable to respond to my assignments/queries/requests each week, I will need to inform the Administration so that someone can reach out to you and your family to make sure you are ok and have what you need. I know that sometimes students put off responding and then forget to do it, but it is really important that you don't do that! I will need to follow up when a student doesn't respond, which takes a lot of time. I want to be able to quickly get to the students who are truly unable to respond and who need help from me, administration, or other resources. You can help me by doing your responses!

We can do this, friends. I sure do miss you.

Google Classroom Password:

Office Hours: Available in real time Mondays and Tuesdays, 9:00 - 10:00 via email, text, phone or Google Meet

Email:

Phone:

Letter and Learning Opportunity for April 6

Dear Students,

Good morning! First, I hope that you had a peaceful break. I missed you. I think it was helpful to have some time to try to process this new reality we are all trying to navigate.

A lot has changed in the past week, and our plan forward will be evolving this week. As I am sure you all know, Governor Whitmer cancelled in-person education for the rest of the year, but there will still be learning happening! More to come on that!

For now, please read the attached link, which includes a Humans of New York story about Coach Durante. I am hoping that you can think of someone in your life...a coach, a teacher, an instructor, a friend's parent, a relative, an old friend, etc., Think about someone who has made a positive impact in your life in a big or a small way.

Write a letter to that person. Reach out to them and let them know what they've meant to you. I am hoping that you can send the letter in the good old fashioned mail. But, if that presents obstacles, email works too.

People impact our lives in big and small ways every day, and this opportunity gives you the chance to give back a little and bring some joy into someone's life. This is a kindness that you can do today!

So, write a letter, reach out, and connect. In doing so, you will make someone's day.

For this assignment, you can either share your letter with me, or you can tell me whom you wrote to and how that person impacted your life.

Love,
Tracy

<https://www.humansofnewyork.com/post/614138613496741900/we-always-heard-stories-about-him-even-before-i>

Letter and Learning Opportunity for March 27

Dear Students,

Before we go away for spring break, I would like you to write a letter to me. We always start the year with this letter, and it is really time for another one. Start your letter with "Dear Tracy," and go from there. Write about your life, your thoughts, your hopes, your journalism work, what you are doing, questions you have, etc., Anything at all. Let me hear your voice in it. Letters are typically between one to three pages.

Please turn this in today or tomorrow.

I will be around during break, but I won't be posting anything (because we are not supposed to). But, I am here if you need me. I wish you and yours a wonderful, peaceful time. I miss you so much.

Love,
Tracy

Letter and Learning Opportunities for March 25

Dear Students,

I am attaching a lot of article options for you to read! I tried to pick Communicator articles from our digital archives! I picked them because they either were good recs for movies to watch (and also models for reviews), because they were opinion articles that could push you to think (and also models for opinion pieces you could write out of school), or because they were stories about people (also models for human interest articles that you could write outside of school with a zoom or Google meet interview). Putting them together took me down memory lane and it made me realize that your work...your words and your

stories endure the passage of time. Ten years from now, I may be showing your work to the class of 2030! :)

As you are reading these articles (you can pick and choose what you read), you might want to jot down some observations, notes, ideas, etc.,

I am hoping that in the coming days you can do the following:

1. Contribute one picture with a story/caption to go with it about what you have been up to. You can send this to Zoe! She is doing a series.
2. Work on another piece for web or social media. It can be inspired by the examples above. It can be a video, a photo story, a how-to video, a playlist...anything!

Please do what you can do during this time! Your work can be a comfort, an inspiration, a learning experience, etc., for your readers! Let's pull together and do our best...and take care of ourselves and our loved ones.

I would love to see whatever you are working on, so please send it to me through here when you finish it.

Thank you so much.

Love,

Tracy

<https://chscommunicator.com/59279/opinion/2018/02/what-the-heck-is-a-regatta-a-history-of-classism-and-confusion/>

<https://chscommunicator.com/59870/opinion/2018/03/re-wired/>

<https://chscommunicator.com/19918/the-archive/2018/04/incurable-optimist-rissa-haynes-2/>

<https://chscommunicator.com/63265/voice/narratives/2018/11/are-you-there-margaret-its-me-god/>

<https://chscommunicator.com/62969/features/2018/11/every-part-of-me-chloe-root/>

Learning Opportunity for March 23 (This one came from a student!)

Dear Students,

This is from Zoe and I am hoping that you can do this! Please share it with me here, and send it to Zoe too! It would be awesome if you could do this today:)

From Zoe: "Hey guys! We're going to do a photo story on week 1 of no school/quarantine. The question is: What's one thing you did this week that made you happy (big or small)? And then send in a photo of you doing it or just of something you did/something that made you happy this week. My hope is to compile a series of photos with captions of what people have been up to in order to give inspiration to others. Share with your friends! Please send them to me!"

I hope that you have a good day today. Do a little bit for your mind, a little bit for your body, and a little bit for your soul.

Love,
Tracy

Letter to Students and Learning Opportunities for March 18

Dear Students,

Hello. Oh man, I miss you. It's hard to write this knowing that I won't see you, but we will do this!

First, you and your family come before journalism. Do what you need to do, but I am hoping that our work will give you a sense of purpose, community and challenge. See my email that I sent for all my feelings on this:)

Here are some options for you!

Choose from the list below (You can do one that takes more time or many! Do what you can do!)

1. Make a daily schedule that will help you. Please try this! Make time for some learning, relaxation, exercise, time away from your screen, time playing, etc., People who have done this have said that it helps! At least try it. I would love to see your schedule!
2. Learn something new! It can be playing around with our Adobe software, making a video, practicing photography, etc.,
3. Work on your edition 5/web article and get it up onto FLOW for editing! (I will be video conferencing with editors soon to discuss edition 5. For now, you might want to focus on web and putting your print articles online. More to come later.)
4. Start working on Senior Edition articles and alternative story forms!!!! This might be a good time to be in touch with old CHS students for a "Letter Home," getting current senior essays and photos (we usually use some of their senior photos), playlists, then and now, etc., I think that we can use this time to reach out to seniors and give them some connection. Interviews for senior edition can be serious or just downright fun. And, I think at this point, we might want to lean into the fun.
5. Create social media posts/stories.
6. Work on a video, HOC, etc., for web. Personally, I would love to see what people are doing. It would help me feel connected. So, maybe think about ways you can use journalism to help me and others!
7. Create something new. This is a time for innovation. Maybe it's the How-To videos. Maybe it is a five minute interview that you record and put online. I am not sure what it is, but it would be great to develop out some web constants right now.
8. This is your choice! Use your intellect, creativity and imagination to come up with your own option!
9. Work on your portfolio. I found out that we don't have access to Adobe Portfolio. Boo! From the research that I have done Wix and Weebly are the places to go. I think that Wix is a bit trickier, but allows for more design. There are also paid sites that you can do. Those would include Squarespace, Wordpress (pay to get rid of those ads!), and Adobe Portfolio, but I think you need your own CC account in order to get it. If you find out more info that you think would be helpful to others, please share it on Classroom. Use those websites that I gave you as models for setting your portfolio up!

10. Finally, I am encouraging you to read some books. Sit back, relax and enjoy. We are so busy in class, that we don't have time to add in books. But, they are so important. Remember that Hemingway, Fitzgerald, Steinbeck, etc., were all journalists! And, then they took their observation and dialogue skills over to the fictional world. Go figure. For the assignment, let me know what you are reading and what you are thinking about/taking away from it.

Let's keep the website and social media going strong for our community. Do what you can, when you can. We will all be experiencing a wide-range of emotions, and there is room for all of those. We can pull each other up as we continue our work and connection. Journalism is a powerful tool for fostering connection and sharing information. Let's use it.

I can't wait to see your screenshots, your links, your articles, your videos, your photos, etc., I seriously can't wait!

I am here. Please let me know if you need anything. I have extra toilet paper:) You can get in touch through email, text, calls, etc.,

Love,
Tracy

Letter to Students and Learning Opportunities for March 19, 2020

Dear Students,

Good morning!

First, I hope everyone is doing well. Please know that you can reach out at any time! I am here! I want to remind you that your first priority is taking care of yourself and the people whom you love. That is going to look different for all of us, and we will all have some ups and some downs. We will get through this.

Second, I am giving you a poem to start your day! I hope it gives you a moment of pause and peace. I also included an article about how the NYTimes reads poetry at the morning meetings. It's pretty cool.

I want to emphasize that this week and next week we are focusing on connection with some learning choices, but work will not be graded this week or next week. All of the deadlines that we had set are out the window. We are starting new. There are no formal assignments, but I hope that you are able to do what you can with the options that I am putting out there! I am always happy to see what you are working on - whether it is related to our class, or it is just something you are doing! Pretty soon, I plan on making some clothes and I will definitely be showing them to you! Low expectations on this, ok! I haven't sewn in a really long time! Try to find a mixture of activities to keep your brain, body and creativity alive and well.

I hope that today brings you some peace, some joy, and some love. Again, text or email if you need anything.

Love,
Tracy

<https://www.nytimes.com/2020/03/05/reader-center/poetry-national-news.html>

<https://poets.org/poem-a-day>

Letter to Students and Learning Opportunities March 18, 2020

Hello all.

I hope that you are well. We just had our first Communicator class Zoom, and the bright spot in my day was seeing and hearing from students! Let me know if you need any help getting onto it. We will do another Zoom on Friday at 4:30, so please attend if you can! I would love to see all of your faces!

Until then, if you can, please take a look at this spreadsheet and add your social media posts, videos, articles, etc., into it so we can see what people are working on. Senior Edition is the second tab in here, so take a look at that too! No matter what, we will be printing a Senior Edition...and it is seriously going to be the best edition that there ever will be.

Some journalism staffs around the country are doing daily diaries and sharing them. We could do this as a Spark page or something if some of you want to work together on this. I encourage you to reach out to others in the class and collaborate in any way that you can! Work on an opinion piece together, create a Spark, video chat while you are combing through social media posts you think would be cool for us to highlight (with people's permission.)

I hope that you find work to do for Communicator that brings some sense of purpose into your life. You might not be able to do work every day, but on those hard days, maybe it is looking at other people's posts that brings you some sense of peace.

Our "work" for this week and next week will be suggested and not graded! I know we are all doing our best and doing what we can do right now as we adjust to all of this.

Please let me know if you, yours, or people you know need anything.

Love,
Tracy

Letter to Students and Learning Opportunities March 17, 2020

Good morning:). I hope that you are doing well.

Check out this article about Comcast that you can get at home and Free Hot Spots. Let me know if you need any help!

I hope that you get outside today to enjoy some of the sunshine that is coming our way. It is supposed to be rainy in the upcoming days, so today is your day!

Please let me know if you need anything. I am here!

Love,
Tracy

<https://www.mlive.com/business/2020/03/comcast-offering-free-internet-to-low-income-homes-increase-d-speeds-open-wifi-hot-spots-to-all.html>
<https://wifi.xfinity.com/>