

*Whether you are a new or returning Parker student/family this year, we know that it might be hard to imagine what this school year will look like. We offer the brief narrative below to try to paint a picture of what a single school day might look for our students (this imagined day is some time later this fall). This is a hypothetical day in the life of a sample Division 1 or 2 student (Div 3 students, your schedule will be similar, but with two shorter AH classes instead of one longer one, etc.). Not all days will look just like this, and we may need to make adjustments as we go, but we hope the “story” below helps you get a sense of our goals for the Parker Remote Plus experience as we start our year together this fall. Note: when it says “Teams” that is the remote web conferencing software we use (like Zoom) and all students will be taught to use it. Again, this “story” is not a series of hard and fast promises, but the goal for the kind of Remote Plus experience we seek to create this fall at Parker.*

Maria’s Remote Plus Parker school day begins with advisory, where a group of about 15 students and 2 adults start their day together. Since the advisory group established routines for getting to know each other and sharing their experiences as the year began, when they sign on to Teams each morning, they fall into a practiced routine of talking together, going over logistical/planning items, and having some fun. In addition to the full advisory that meets daily, Maria also meets with one of her advisors regularly – sometimes individually and sometimes in a small group of 2 or 3 students – where they talk in more detail about how school is going and what adjustments can be made going forward to plan for success. Maria knows that her parents get a weekly update from the school summarizing her engagement/work completion in classes each week, so this helps her to share when she feels stuck so that she can access the help she needs.

After advisory, Maria goes to her AH class on Teams. AH always starts their 80-minute time slot together as a whole group so the teachers can outline the day’s work (“synchronous” class), and they often start class with a full group activity. Yesterday, they used software called Padlet to do a “chalktalk” about the book they are reading. (Everything Maria needs for class is in one place, and since all Maria’s classes use the same organizational set-up on the computer, it only took about a week to learn where everything was and how to get to it. Maria’s teachers all helped her and her classmates learn to use these systems, and since it is the same in all her classes, she doesn’t really have any questions about where the materials she needs for class are.) After the full group activity, Maria’s AH class often moves into breakout rooms in Teams, where they do smaller group discussions or activities. Sometimes Maria gets some time during class to do independent work, and she can step away from the computer for a while even though she is still in AH class and has a specific task to accomplish. Her teacher always tells the class what time to come back and what they are supposed to have completed when they return, and the teacher stays on the computer so that students can come ask questions if they have them. Maria does have some AH work to do each day outside of the shared class time, and this is usually reading or writing, watching a video, or doing some independent thinking and project work. She meets with her AH teacher in office hours about once a week, either alone or with a small group of students, to check in, ask questions, and make sure things are going well.

After AH, Maria goes to Spanish class, where her teachers use all kinds of interesting remote tools to help students engage with each other and learn the language for their 40-minute class. They often stay together as a whole group, but sometimes during Spanish class, Maria has an independent activity to do off of the computer while the teacher meets with small rotating groups of students. (Maria’s day to meet in a small group with the Spanish teacher during class is Tuesday.) After Spanish, Maria has a slot in her day called Flex, where several things might happen. Once a week, this is when she meets with her AH or MST teacher for office hours. Periodically, this is the time when she meets with her Wellness teacher to go over her progress on her personal health/fitness plan (every student has one of these plans for self-care and physical activity). Other days, this is asynchronous work time, where Maria doesn’t have a class or a meeting, but she can use the time to exercise, take a break, or get some school work done. Then it is time for lunch! Everyone in the school has the same hour for lunch in the middle of the day so that they can get off the computer, stretch, and take a break. Often, Maria chooses to join a peer lunch group through Teams, but some days she goes outside for a walk or has lunch with a parent who is working from home.

After lunch, Maria gets back on Teams for MST. Like AH, MST always starts altogether at the same time so that the teachers can review the learning plan for the 80 minutes of class. And, like AH, sometimes the whole class stays together for a demonstration or a discussion. Today, though, Maria spends about half of class time in a small group where she and her partners are doing some follow-up on a lab they are doing together on Teams. Each student has a specific role in the lab work, and they share their information and questions to understand the concepts. When it is time for the class to come back together, everyone shares their learning from the lab activity. Then, they break out into different small groups for ten minutes to work through a math challenge or two and rejoin the full class again to share out their solutions. Maria has some questions about the math they are working on and her “asynchronous” homework, but she knows that if there is not time to ask the question during class, she can talk more with her teacher during office hours that afternoon. Teachers have office hours at the end of the day, and Maria can ask her questions there as needed. (Friday is her day to meet with her MST teacher during office hours, and – even if she doesn’t have a question – and just like AH, they will go over how things are going and make a plan, if needed, to get unstuck!)

Maria’s scheduled class day ends at 2:30, and she might attend office hours until 3:30. Now that the synchronous school day is over, she won’t see her teachers again until the next day, but, just like if school were in session in the building, Maria has some “homework” – that is, asynchronous learning and work to do outside of class time. It always feels a little funny to call it homework these days, since all the work is happening at home, but Maria understands that “homework” means tasks she is working on outside of the synchronous class time she has each day. Her teachers have been very clear about communicating what needs to be done and by when, and Maria knows if she has questions in the evening, she can always send an email (or a Teams chat message from her phone or her computer) that her teacher can respond to the next day, or she can pop into office hours the next day to talk with a teacher. Maria’s teachers always give her a sense of how long they think the task will take, and she knows that if it takes her a lot longer than that amount of time, she should be in touch with them.

Before the school year started, Maria had lots of questions about what the “Plus” part of a “Remote Plus” year would look like. Now that school has been in session for a while, she has a better sense of what it is, though she knows that it will continue to evolve with the seasons and weather changes. In the first few weeks of school, Maria went to campus several times to meet with her advisory for an hour or two each time. Not everyone came to campus, since some families decided they did not want to access these “Remote Plus” activities (and Maria knows her parents had to juggle a few things to get her to school), but most kids in the advisory were there. It felt good to get to talk and interact with her advisory members face to face, even though being six feet apart and outside made it a little hard to hear people sometimes. Still, it was worth it, because you just learn different things about people when you are together than when you are on a computer. One of the days she had advisory on campus, Maria also chose to go on a (socially distanced) “Wellness walk” that was offered; she got to talk with a few new students not in her classes she hadn’t previously connected with, so that was cool. Maria is really looking forward to the lab her MST class is going to do at school in two weeks. She had a choice of several slots she could arrange to come to school (one in the morning, one in the afternoon, and one in the early evening) and her parents picked the one that worked best for their transportation schedule. Her teachers already told her that when she comes to campus to do the lab, she will work in a small group with three other students she already knows from her remote class. She will also have a chance to conference with her AH teacher in person while she is on campus; the content will be the same as their weekly Teams-based meeting, but Maria is looking forward to talking in person. Winter is coming, and Maria knows that the amount of time that can be spent on campus will depend a lot on the public health situation and people’s sense of safety entering the building, but she likes being able to come to campus a few times a month to connect with her peers and teachers in person and to do some activities that are harder to do on Teams. Maria wishes school could just be normal – everyone does – but she knows she is learning a lot this year, not just about the class content, but also about being resilient, flexible, organized, and motivated, plus she is becoming a very effective self-advocate. Her parents and teachers keep telling her how important these skills are in life, so she is taking their word for it and doing the best she can!