

Philadelphia Academies

COVID-19 Response Report

04/2020

COVID-19 RESPONSE: CHANGES TO EXISTING PROGRAMS



In response to the COVID-19 pandemic and stay-at-home mandate, Philadelphia Academies Inc. has enacted a telework policy for all employees. Although the COVID-19 pandemic has shifted the way we perform our work, the PAI team is fully engaging and responding to the educational and socio-emotional needs of our students, families, and partners. During this challenging time, it is of utmost importance for us to live out the value of one of our founders, Charles Bowser, by reminding our students to have faith in their ability to persevere. We have taken some time to reassess what our support looks like to continue to pursue this mission.

“The trick is not to give them something, but to help them find themselves. If I gave them anything, it was faith in their own potential.” - Charles Bowser

On March 13th, the School District of Philadelphia closed all of its schools indefinitely which presented the challenge of connecting with students and school staff to continue our programs. As a result, our staff have reached out to check in with students, teachers and administrators over the phone and via Zoom web conferencing. While there is a lot of confusion around what will happen on a day-to-day basis, the students and school staff have reiterated their commitment to engage in our programs and we have shifted the platforms we use accordingly. Moving forward, we will support students in our programs primarily via Zoom and individual check-ins. We are also working diligently to reformat our 9th Grade Success Network services to be compatible with an online format—and considering the possibility of providing weekly professional development sessions.



COVID-19 RESPONSE: DEPLOYING NEW PROJECTS

PAI has designed four new projects to address the needs of our students in this ever-changing landscape caused by the pandemic. These projects engage students in virtual learning experiences to continue their education and development. The purpose is to provide opportunities for students to learn about various industries, expand their professional skillset, and prepare for college and career. Students will participate in weekly challenges related to their career and technical education pathway, consider their future and design their own vision boards, network with an industry expert in their career of choice, and learn how to craft a professional resume.

In addition to these four projects, each existing PAI program is adapting current work streams to fit the digital/remote learning space. Here are some things we are doing to continue our work:

- The 9th Grade Success team is adapting their final Community of Practice meeting to be an online Zoom conference meeting – with time for breakout groups – for our eight 9th Grade Success Network schools
- Academy Advisory Council meetings are continuing, now over phone and Zoom
- Middle school programming is still forthcoming — meetings and check-ins continue via Zoom
- Shifts in Bridge programming are still forthcoming— meetings and check-ins continue via Zoom
- Our support for Roxborough’s STEAM Scholar graduates, who are currently in college, continues through phone and online check-ins with students — in addition to assistance with helping students move off campus and back home as most colleges have closed dorms and transitioned to online classes
- BOHA programming has been quickly adapted to a virtual format, translating their in-person activities to online platforms, and adapting all four of PAI's new projects into their program.

Project Timeline

In March, our team met to reimagine our purpose during this unique time. March consisted of designing and planning new activities to meet the challenge of engaging students, families and industry experts during school and business closures. Each new project has a timeline based on the target audience and deliverable. However, all projects are slated to roll-out in April and continue throughout May.



April

- Weekly Challenges (every Friday)
- Live Online Courses (bi-weekly)
- Vision Boards (start: April 6th, weekly)
- Virtual Industry Tours (TBD)
- Community of Practice (April 22nd)
- Continue existing programmatic supports via Zoom (ongoing)

May

- Evaluate projects
- Revamp and continue projects based on need

COVID-19 RESPONSE: OVERVIEW OF NEW PROJECTS



Virtual Industry Tours

During this time of remote work and learning, PAI will continue to connect students to industry through our virtual industry tour initiative. Although schools are closed, we aim to help students build their professional networks and learn about new career options virtually. We are currently planning 3 virtual industry tours where students will hear from a professional in a high-priority field, tour their organization, and participate in a question and answer session. PAI is committed to continuing to connect students to industry and empowering young people with the knowledge they need to shape their own career path.



Online Live Workshops

In order to foster career skill building for our young people, PAI is hosting a series of online workshops through the Zoom platform. Students will have the opportunity to participate in bi-weekly 1-hour sessions on resume writing, interview skills, financial aid, and “college fit”, among other topics. At the end of each interactive session, students will walk away with skills and knowledge that will help them better access short and long-term job opportunities and post-secondary education.



Vision Boards

Our vision board project will encourage students to research their career paths using a very hands-on approach. Students will research college and post secondary options based on the industry and career of their choice. Based on that research, they will gather pictures, images and text to create an informative collage of their post-secondary ideas and aspirations. In this process, our students will get a glimpse of the connection between school and the industry of their choice and consider what they may need to do now in order to be able to access the opportunities they seek. We hope to also foster community and group accountability with our students as they share out their Vision Boards .



Weekly Challenges

To ensure that students remain engaged in career-connected learning during this time, our staff have developed a series of interactive projects for students to complete related to their Career and Technical Education pathway of study. These projects range from online simulations to graphic design challenges to entrepreneurial research presentations. Each week students receive instructions on how to participate in a new challenge. At the end of the week, students will share their outcomes with our staff as well as other students. In order to accommodate distance learning, not only can every project be completed digitally, but the projects can also be completed on any smart phone (equipped with certain free apps), for students who do not have computers at home.