

Dear TFS parents and faculty/staff:

As of 6:00PM today, Friday, March 13<sup>th</sup>, we have decided to close the school until March 23<sup>rd</sup> when we will re-evaluate the local status and our preparedness to accept students back into the classroom. We have set up a [page](#) on the school website for updates. Please continue to check back often as we will continue to provide updates regularly.

Bishop Zarama has given us permission for this closure and to extend it if necessary. At this time, there are no known COVID-19 cases within our school community. However, with the widespread community effort to stem the “Community Spread” of the virus, we exercised the decision to close our campus, especially given the associated closure of many public, private and Catholic Schools in the area.

Since COVID-19 appeared as a growing public health concern, and our Catholic schools have been preparing for potential changes to instructional delivery should social separation protocols be adopted by the schools or Diocese out of concern for our populations. TFS was certainly no exception, and I have been involved in an informal COVID-19 preparedness group consisting of administrators at TFS, other Catholic principals in the area, Parish staff, some parent experts, and Diocesan School and other staff who have been working together over the past several days discussing plans and contingencies. One of these contingencies is the use of digital learning to extend the school experience beyond the classroom.

We are preparing for distance learning measures as we speak, and will communicate all of that to you as soon as final procedures are finalized. Today all 5<sup>th</sup> – 8<sup>th</sup> grade students have been told to take home their assigned Chromebook and charger. Please make sure your child charges their Chromebook each day. For our younger elementary students, we will assure that any supplies they need are sent home with them or available to pick up if they are out today; a pick up schedule will be announced.

The faculty and staff will be here Monday to discuss best practices, seek technology assistance if needed, and start sending information home by Tuesday. I have attached some grade-dependent guidelines for distance learning as well.

As communicated previously, we continue to work in collaboration with our local health departments, medical experts, and the Diocese of Raleigh. We have also decided to take additional steps to minimize transmission of respiratory viruses among within our parent and school population, including:

- Cancellation of all field trips for the remainder of March.
- Suspension of all games and after school practices, beginning today, Friday, March 13<sup>th</sup> and as was communicated separately to all MS parents, for the remainder of March and potentially until after Easter break.
- Cancellation of all after school clubs and activities, excluding Bridges, until further notice.

**HSA specific events:**

Delay of the Mother/Son Bowling originally scheduled for 3/22 until May

Delay of the HSA Trivia Night scheduled for April 4<sup>th</sup> until the Fall

Delay of the Wolf Dash 5K run on March 28<sup>th</sup> until May

Cancellation of the HSA general meeting scheduled for April 1<sup>st</sup>.

Determinations about field trips and other events scheduled for late April and May will be made at a later date. Impacts to other scheduled events in the future also be determined over the next few weeks.

Please know we greatly appreciate your understanding and we know this is a hardship for you and your family; that is deeply understood and we don't take these actions lightly. It is our common aim to properly prepare and act to keep our community safe as we battle this pandemic. If we do this well, we will be able to continue serving students, regardless of any temporary challenges we may face and certainly overcome! Thank you again for your continuous support.

I appreciate you for being a strong supporter of The Franciscan School and for your thoughtful consideration of what is best for our community in these unusual times. Please continue to check back on our [website](#) for additional updates.

Sincerely,

Michael Watson

Principal at The Franciscan School

***Faith, Academics, and Service in the Franciscan Tradition***

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