

Date: October 3, 2020

Topic: TFS IOWA Test Update and CSO Update

Dear TFS parents and faculty and staff:

I hope each of you are getting the chance to enjoy this beautiful fall weekend. As we look to the start of our annual ITBS (IOWA) and CogAT testing this week, please see below some important key points about the process this year. I have also offered the update on the Diocesan School's response to Plan A.

ITBS (IOWA) and CogAT Testing

The Franciscan School administers the IOWA tests every year for 3rd-8th grades, and also CogAT tests for 3rd and 5th grades. These tests provide:

- a general sense of our school's academic program performance, and evidence of academic growth as per recommendations of the Diocese and the State.
- data for internal use to better differentiate instruction for our students.
- longitudinal data to show student progress across their years at The Franciscan School.

This year, due to the demands of the pandemic response, the tests are different.

- Required spacing and limits on our personnel will prevent us from offering normal accommodations.
- To accommodate those students who are distance learning or on the hybrid model, testing this year requires us to administer the tests in a different way, and even administer them in different ways within a grade.
- Weekly schedules have been adjusted differently than in the past to accommodate a compacted testing timeline.

Although the tests are required by the Diocese, we do recognize the integrity of the process and the usefulness of the data could be suspect due to all of the alterations in testing schedules and protocols to address the impacts of our pandemic schedules.

We anticipate that we could have technical issues given the short training timeframe provided by the testing company and the unfamiliarity with the online and remote testing protocols, but we will address them as best as we can. We also will **not** use this data for placement or any other widespread internal use other than to see if there seem to be areas for improvement. We are always looking to find ways to better serve our students.

We ask everyone to please take the tests seriously and the students should try their best, but do not stress or worry about the scores. Students should get plenty of rest, bring a book to read during the open times between the testing periods, and relax after the school day to refresh from testing. There is no homework during this testing week.

Governor Cooper's Plan A Decision

This week we received guidance from the Catholic Schools office about their recommendations based on the Governor's announced decision to NC public school districts to move to "Plan A" if their local COVID-19 conditions would allow the change.

As a reminder, Plan A requirements are essentially the same as we are doing now under Plan B at TFS, but would allow for more students per classroom and remove the 6-foot distancing requirements, but only within classrooms. All other conditions (mask wearing, social distancing outside of the classroom, remaining within classroom cohorts during the day, etc.) would remain in place.

The guidance we have received this week was that "at this time, the Office of Education, is NOT recommending schools in the Diocese of Raleigh move to Plan A." At TFS, we are exploring whether there can be some changes we can make, with the guidance of the Diocese, that would help facilitate our academic programs. Any changes will be well communicated in advance and done in a collaborative decision-making process involving faculty and staff, parish and school leadership, and our school COVID task force.

As always, thanks for your support of The Franciscan School.

With gratitude,

Mike Watson
Principal, The Franciscan School