

**Date: September 27<sup>th</sup>, 2020**

Dear TFS parents and faculty and staff:

I hope everyone has had a long, restful weekend. There are several updates that I want to bring to your attention that will impact schedules for the remainder of the trimester. Please see below for these details.

### **Community Masses**

We were excited to start our weekly Community Masses this past week. It was amazing to be able to return to the in-person celebration of our faith. The plan is to move forward with weekly masses with one class in attendance and the remainder of the school watching the live-stream. However, due to work in the sanctuary of the church over the next few weeks, we will not hold these Community Masses for the next two weeks. We will use our "regular" schedule this Wednesday and return to weekly masses on October 14th.

### **IOWA Testing**

The faculty and staff are diligently planning for the upcoming IOWA tests. We plan on testing all students online, whether students are at home or on-campus. The exception to this will be our on-campus 3rd and 4th graders, who will take the traditional pencil and paper test. More details will be coming out this week.

### **Calendar Changes:**

To accommodate the IOWA/CogAT testing and allow for preparation for the October 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> Conference Days, we are making the following changes to our school calendar:

- **October 7<sup>th</sup>, 2020 will be an Early Release Day.**

Dismissal times will be 3 hours earlier that day:

11:35AM: First carpool  
11:50AM: Second carpool  
12:05PM: Third carpool  
12:20PM: Fourth carpool

- **October 16<sup>th</sup> is now a teacher work day and will not be a day for students to attend classes.**

Please note these workdays on your calendars. We do apologize for any inconvenience to your personal schedules.

We hope to add some additional teacher workdays in the coming months, with the approval of the Diocese and Pastor, to allow for our teachers to have additional planning time during this year. Even with these few additional workdays, our altered schedules this year allow for much more class time during this school year in the core subjects

(Religion, SS, Math, Science, and ELA) than we have had in previous years. These days allow teachers time to plan and collaborate to even better serve your students.

### **Governor Cooper Announcement**

Last week Governor Cooper announced that elementary school students (k-5<sup>th</sup> grades ONLY) in public schools can attend under Plan A if their districts allow. I attended a meeting with the Diocesan Catholic Schools office and all of the principals of the Diocesan Catholic schools on this very topic last Wednesday. The superintendent and her team sought the feedback from the principals, and the Catholic Schools Office will send their recommendations to us this week.

After we receive those recommendations, we will consult with our school and Parish administration, faculty and staff, and our COVID task force, and we will let you know of any decisions that will change our current structure under Plan B. Whatever the outcome, it will take some time to make any changes to our current schedules.

### **Distance Learning Students Return to Campus**

We will be offering the opportunity to our Distance Learning families to return to in-school instruction earlier than the end of the first trimester specified in the Distance Learning agreement. We are doing this for several reasons:

- First, as we have always said, Distance Learning is not ideal. We offered it as an option this year to families who have had concerns with potential COVID 19 exposures during the uncertain start to this school year. Some students are thriving, or at least maintaining their studies, but others are struggling. We have had several families request if they could come back to school early, but we want to do it in an organized way.
- Secondly, our COVID-19 protocols have proven successful in keeping our campus safe, and many families are more confident in sending their children to in-school instruction.
- We have always said we would save spots for our distance learning students to return and would not fill their spots in-house with additional students. Those spots are available for those students if they wish to return now or at the end of the first trimester..

We ask that any family wishing to have their children return on October 12th (the early return date), to make that request to Dawn Smith ([dawn.smith@stfrancisraleigh.org](mailto:dawn.smith@stfrancisraleigh.org)) for K-5th grade students or Colette Dziadul ([colette.dziadul@stfrancisraleigh.org](mailto:colette.dziadul@stfrancisraleigh.org)) for MS students. This request must be made by **October 6th, 2020** so we can assure that we have the appropriate classroom setup for their return.

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

With great gratitude,

Mike Watson, Principal  
The Franciscan School

