

Dear Parent,

As COVID-19 is now clearly occurring in our area, our crisis team is meeting daily, assessing both our current and possible future plans to keep our students and staff safe, so that we can go about our primary business of educating students.

I would like to share some plans and decisions that are effective immediately and will be in place until we return from spring break on Monday, April 20. During spring break all of these decisions will be reassessed in recognition of the rapidly evolving situation.

Social Distancing – (a term applied to certain actions that are taken by Public Health officials to stop or slow down the spread of a highly contagious disease)

WMA will begin immediate implementation of measures to minimize our students' contact with outsiders. Visitors will be limited to those who have business with the school. This means that until April 20:

- Mystery/Guest readers will be limited to staff only.
- Community Gathering is limited to students and staff only.
- Stations of the Cross will be held in classrooms rather than the Motherhouse Chapel
- Montessori students who arrive after 8:15 a.m. will only be escorted by staff to their classrooms
- Scheduled preventative programming by the Victim Services Center and the DA's Office will be postponed.
- Our Diversity Career Day planned for March 24 will be postponed.
- Tours and school visits will continue with families being asked to affirm the health of the visitor
- Decisions about the Chorale trip and other field trips will be made on a case-by-case basis as we receive more information from health officials.
- As of today, we plan to hold our *Pirates! 2* musical on a modified basis. The Outreach performance scheduled for next Thursday will be replaced with a show for the student body, giving our performers a sizeable in-house audience. We will then hold two performances, Thursday and Friday nights, to give both parents an opportunity to attend (without siblings who have already seen the show). We STRONGLY encourage grandparents, older adults, and those with compromised immune systems to watch the videotape of the performance the students will receive ASAP. This plan will allow us to minimize and spread out the size of the crowd. [Visit](#) the COVID-19 section of our website for additional information, particularly about exchanging Saturday night tickets already purchased.

WMA is also making efforts to eliminate and/or spread out our large student gatherings. Therefore, until April 20:

- Kindergarten will not attend Community Gathering. Seventh graders will sit in the bleacher space and the remaining students sitting on the floor will be spread out.
- After morning drop-off, students will leave the gym for their classrooms at 7:50 when the crowd begins to increase, instead of at 8:00 a.m.

- At dismissal, students will be separated by backpacks and sit in spread out lines
- Baseball, softball, and track will not hold practice if it is raining. The CAL will meet on March 30 to make decisions regarding games. Visit the COVID-19 section of our website for additional sports information, including the intramural program which will continue at this time.
- Girl Scouts and clubs will proceed as scheduled with the knowledge that parents may self-select whether their child participates in these optional programs..

At this time, we are planning to hold Tigerfest as scheduled on April 4. Since we realize that we or Merion Mercy might feel it could be harmful for our community to gather for the function, we are developing plans for a possible online auction.

Non-School Related Travel

If you travel, please be mindful of travel alerts and advisories from the CDC. If you travel to one of the countries considered high risk, or have had "close contact" with someone who has been in a CDC-restricted area within the past 14 days, please contact Mrs. Candace Flowers, School Nurse, at 610-664-9847 ext. 112 or at cbflowers@waldronmercy.org.

Educational Program

Our crisis team and our educators are working hard to create virtual and distance learning plans that will enable students of all ages to learn from home. We are forming our plans with the understanding that our oldest students are already familiar with some of the techniques and programs they will use from home while the capabilities of our youngest vary. To date, we have decided:

- Beginning today, March 11, all students will bring to and from school books that might be needed for classwork in case of a closure.
- We will be asking students and parents to verify they have appropriate log-in information for all necessary software, including OptionC. Please make sure you have pencils and paper ready at home!!!
- Beginning today, March 11, all students in grades 5-8 will bring their Chromebooks in carrying cases and chargers to and from school each day. Students must bring Chromebooks back to school each day fully charged.
- Beginning tomorrow, March 12, students in grade 4 will start bringing Chromebooks in carrying cases and chargers to and from school each day. Students must bring Chromebooks back to school each day fully charged.
- Third grade students will also bring Chromebooks to and from school each day as soon as we receive delivery of additional carrying cases we have ordered and expect by Friday. Students must bring Chromebooks back to school each day fully charged.
- If the need does arise to close WMA for any period of time and we are able to give our students advanced warning, students in first and second grade will leave school with their iPads which are loaded with various educational apps.

- We will provide a virtual/distance learning webpage with further directions if/when necessary.
- In the event of a lengthy closure, WMA will use at least one of our built-in “snow days” to allow our teachers to set up their distance learning plans.

We do realize that transporting these items places a physical burden on our students, so we will be carefully monitoring the situation. Since we may have no advanced warning of a closure by the health department, we feel that there is no other way for us to ensure virtual learning can take place.

Terra Nova testing, which is scheduled to begin on March 18, will continue as planned, but we ask you to PLEASE adhere to our policy of not sending sick children to school, even during this important week. We have a few make-up days the following week to account for testing of sick students.

Preventive Recommendations

For now, in addition to contingency planning, our main focus is on preventative measures to contain the spread of the virus. Please do not send your child to school if s/he is feeling sick. Faculty members will be flexible regarding make-up work. Students who are at school and exhibit a fever or other flu-like symptoms will be immediately secluded and sent home. Additionally, we remind you to take these preventative steps:

- Students must be fever free for 24 hours (without using fever-reducing medications) before returning to school.
- Avoid close contact with people who are sick.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth.
- Stay home when you are sick.
- Cover your cough or sneeze with a tissue; then throw the tissue in the trash.
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces using a regular household cleaning spray or wipe.
- Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, especially after going to the bathroom; before eating; and after blowing your nose, coughing, or sneezing.

Communications

There is a dedicated page on our school website containing school information and helpful links about COVID-19. We will update this page frequently, so please refer to it if you have any questions.

There is a lot of uncertainty about the impact of COVID-19, and we are doing our best to respond to a changing situation. We will continue to update you on our planning and appreciate your support and partnership as we move forward.

In Mercy,

Ann Marie Braca

