Dear Parent,

Yesterday Governor Wolf announced that he will be closing all non-essential travel, services and activities within Montgomery County, including our school community. This decision was not made lightly but was made in an abundance of caution, as the public health benefits outweigh the challenges this decision presents us. School will be closed from March 13 through March 27. From this most recent directive we anticipate students will return to school on March 30.

We have made some decisions about distance learning that are important for all of you, including your students, to know. They will be posted on our website and are listed here below:

- All students in grades 1-8 brought home a digital device for distance learning, iPads in grades 1 and 2 and Chromebooks in grades 3-8. Please know that your child is responsible for maintaining these devices.
- Distance Learning will be occurring from 8 am to 3 pm daily from Monday to Thursday March 16-19. The following week’s schedule will be posted next week.
- You and your child can access daily assignments by following the directions on the teacher/grade webpages or, in the case of Montessori, daily emails.
- Students will follow their number day schedule, including specials, which will be posted on the teacher web pages.
- Teachers will be maintaining their six-day school schedule rotation and will only be unavailable during recess, lunch, prep times.
- Students in grades 3-8 will be expected to communicate daily directly with their teachers through various methods, such as Google Classrooms, classroom blogs, and Parlay. This communication will **track daily attendance allowing us to count the days as instructional hours for Pennsylvania’s Department of Education.**
- We will track attendance in grades K-2 and Montessori 5. Specifics on this will be provided on individual teachers’ webpages. Please remember that in order for us to **count the days as instructional hours for Pennsylvania’s Department of Education** their work must be documented.
- To accomplish learning for our youngest students, we recognize we need to ask parents to assume a very supportive role in helping their children achieve the learning plan each day. The teachers are dedicated each day to continue to provide academic support and connection activities that will interest the children. All parental support is appreciated.
• We will not track attendance for students who are three or four years old, as attendance is not mandated at their age. The teachers will, however, provide academic work and play activities for your use.

• Resource teachers will be available during their scheduled days and the time periods that your child is scheduled to see them.

• For our students’ and teachers’ online safety:
  ○ We ask that you monitor the online safety of your child. This means you should know the logins and passwords of all sites they are visiting so you can feel comfortable with their online learning.
  ○ All student communications via email will copy a parent in reply.
  ○ In all virtual classrooms, students need to speak appropriately and respond appropriately, following the guidelines of WMA’s handbook.
  ○ In the event that there is video sharing, students also need to be dressed appropriately.

• Students are expected to participate daily and maintain WMA’s academic standards. All distance learning will be used as the basis for assessments and grades for the third trimester.

• To maintain connections between our community, we will be updating morning announcements and prayers here. This link will also be available on teacher/grade websites.

• Grace Zorn, our school counselor, is available via email should you need her.

• You and your child should visit our distance learning webpage for additional information before beginning.

The PA Department of Education has asked us to share that we know this decision may feel sudden but that we will continue to work closely with them and other state and local officials as we ensure that we can continue our mission to support our school community. We have particularly been asked to emphasize the importance of students, families and staff staying home.

Please be safe and have students work on the educational materials and learning plans we are providing to you. As educators and parents, we need to partner together to make these two weeks officially count instructionally and help ensure students are learning and engaged while we manage this worldwide crisis. We will continue to update you with prompt and accurate information as it becomes available.

As I close, I want to remind you that one of the hallmarks of Mercy education is the constant awareness of the presence of God who is always with us and can be found in every person we encounter. In this unexpected time together as a family, I hope you will turn to God for strength and support and take the opportunity to experience God in each other. I will keep you all in my prayers as I know you will keep all of us in yours as we navigate together these uncharted waters.

In Mercy and Prayer,
Ann Marie