



# ST. THOMAS MORE COLLEGIATE

HOME OF THE KNIGHTS SINCE 1960

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Thursday, March 26, 2020

Dear STMC Students and Parents,

We hope that you and all you hold near and dear are well and in good spirits! Our thoughts, prayers, and good wishes are with each one of you.

The stark realities associated with the COVID-19 crisis have impacted every single person within our school community these last number of weeks. For those of you who are front line workers in health care or emergency response services, transportation, and/or supply-chain industries... we are indebted to all of you! May God continue to protect you and provide you with the strength and courage required to do what you do. Each of you imbue the very notion of servant leadership that is at the core of a Blessed Edmund Rice Education – the very essence of *who* we are and *what* we stand for at St. Thomas More Collegiate. Thank you!

## Shifting From Face-To-Face to An E-Based Remote Learning Platform

The coming days and weeks are going to require herculean patience, a massive dose of good humour, and a selfless, team-first approach from absolutely everyone. Thankfully, we are blessed to have a community full of amazing people – staff, students, and parents – that will allow us to make the difficult possible.

At this juncture we are literally living the reality of having to build a plane while it is flying. Zero question about it... We'll invariably stumble a wee bit before we find our legs. But rest assured... we are in an **excellent** position to make this shift!

In implementing our 1:1 Chromebook initiative last year, we were able to leverage the benefits of a wide range of online learning modalities, including the G-Suite Applications – Google Classroom, Google Docs, Google Forms, and **now Google Meet**. This foundation will allow us to remotely deliver both asynchronous [video, text, and multimedia lessons] and synchronous ['live'] teaching. It obviously will not be business as usual as our (soon to be) new 'normal' will need to look quite different than we've ever seen before.

## Preliminary Plan – Phase 1

Our staff are preparing for the transition to an online learning environment on **Monday, March 30<sup>th</sup> & Tuesday, March 31<sup>st</sup>, 2020**. A series of remote, online learning and planning sessions have been designed for our teachers on these two days. Our colleagues in the independent and public systems will also be preparing to go online, but they may require extended timelines due to technology access and familiarity considerations. At STMC, we have a great advantage in that we have been using these technologies for many years.

We have some very bright people at STMC that are taking the lead in moving us forward using **Google Meet** as our online Remote Teaching & Learning platform. Our staff will need to onboard all 693 students at STMC to effective full-time use of these platforms, and will need to fully review all technical aspects themselves before beginning work



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with our students. Teachers also need time to prepare and adapt lessons for an online learning environment. The shift to Remote Teaching & Learning will – and needs to – look incredibly different. This, also, takes time.

## Preliminary Plan – Phase 2

Our students will be brought into the equation beginning on **Wednesday, April 1<sup>st</sup>, 2020**. Plans vary for each student depending on their grade level. Full details will be shared with all of our students via their school email address next Tuesday afternoon, March 31<sup>st</sup>, 2020.

We will need to use these initial days after April 1<sup>st</sup>, 2020 to help onboard and orientate our students – getting them comfortable with this new platform and getting them used to the new reality of working independently from home.

We have developed a daily timetable that has built-in worktimes, screen breaks, quiet reflection/prayer/contemplation, as well as creative development, home-based physical activity, and social interaction. This schedule will be shared with students and families after we have had the chance to communicate the full details of our plans with our staff early next week. Stay tuned!

## Entering the School

At this time, the school is **completely closed** to all but a handful of essential staff. We have two 83 year old gentlemen for whom our school is far more than a school... it's their home. I took an oath to protect them and the legacy of the Christian Brothers. I know many of you feel as strongly as I do about this too. I'm not putting their health *OR* the health of any of our staff at risk by allowing people to be onsite for ANY REASON until we are able to have a fulsome and comprehensive process in place that ensures the safety for all. Over the past two weeks a deep clean has happened throughout the school including all touch-points, hard surfaces, classrooms and work areas, washrooms and change facilities. We initially indicated that that re-entry *may* occur at some point during the week of March 30-April 3. At this time, there is no timeline in place for entry into the school for any reason to occur. Much bigger issues have, and will, continue to take precedence in the short-term.

## The Realities of the Suspension of In-School Learning

What we must all be acutely aware of is that schools are, by their very construct, social enterprises. Our students (and my staff) have lost a major stabilizing force in their lives at this time: the almost daily physical interaction with their peers and their teachers. The social isolation and physical distancing that has become a necessity of our current situation has been at the forefront of our planning for this shift to on online Remote Teaching & Learning. Learning is important. Getting back to a semblance of a routine is important. But so too is our need to recognize that many within our community – staff, students, and parents – are shouldering other concerns and may need our help.

Community is STMC's 'special sauce'. The challenge for every single one of us at the moment is to ensure that we continue to grow in strength... that we continue to be a source of kindness and compassion... that we continue to live a life of faith in action and action through our faith – the very hallmarks of an Edmund Rice Christian Brother education.



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More information and updates will come to students and families via PowerSchool emails. I also ask that you check for updates that we will be posting to our school website and social media platforms (STMC Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram accounts).

Finally, I ask that you pray for the continued good health of our two Christian Brothers – Bros. Bassett & Cass – as well as everyone associated with our St. Thomas More family!

Yours in Christ,  
Steve Garland  
Principal - STMC