



# GRACE ACADEMY

March 24, 2020

Dear Grace Academy Community,

I hope this email finds you and your families well. I understand this is a stressful and concerning time. Together, we are navigating this global pandemic, one that has had a significant impact on our families and school community. Please know our administration is continually monitoring the national and local impact of COVID-19 through daily phone calls with the Texas Private School Association and the Texas Department of State Health Services, as well as local medical and government officials. We are striving to keep you updated as soon as decisions are made for Grace Academy, and we thank you in advance for your patience as information is changing by the hour.

- Wednesday, March 18, 2020 - Williamson County issued a mass gathering order that prohibits social community gathering of 10 people or more anywhere in the county through May 11. While this order does not directly include schools, it does include churches.
- Thursday, March 19, 2020 - Governor Abbott closed all public and private schools in Texas until at least April 6.
- Tuesday, March 24, 2020 - news outlets are reporting a shelter-in-place order will be issued today for Travis and Williamson counties.

Based on the above proclamations and the guidance we have received; Grace Academy will transition to distance learning on Monday, March 30, and continue until April 20. We will keep you informed on whether or not we can return to campus after April 20.

We recognize that distance learning is not what the Grace Academy curriculum was designed for. We value our mentorship model, where face-to-face interaction is essential, and we recognize that our teachers won't be able to fully engage students as they do when they are teaching in the classroom. However, we are committed to doing the very best we can with the tools of technology that are available. Mr. Popp and I have been diligently working with our faculty on a distance learning plan and we feel confident that it will allow our students to continue in the relationships with teachers as well as the process of learning that they have already established this school year.

That said, we understand that many families face limitations with transitioning to distance learning including having multiple students needing one computer, a parent working from home not being available to help, a parent working out of the house necessitating childcare, and more. As a school, it is always our goal to offer you and your children grace, flexibility and understanding, especially during this challenging time. Therefore, we have decided to initiate academic work on March 30 to allow time for families to work out necessary logistics and prepare for this new remote learning experience.

For this week, we hope you're enjoying a bonus spring break! Your students have no academic work due, so please take this week to relax, rest and prepare. You will receive further (and more detailed) communication soon, but here are the basic points of the distance learning program to help you prepare.

## **ALL FAMILIES:**

- Will need access to FACTS (formally called RenWeb) Family Portal. Please check FACTS often as we will use it for announcements, posting lessons and assignments, and collecting work via Homework Drop. Upper students can (and should) have their own access.
- Will need a scanner or mobile app that can scan documents (or turn them into pdfs).
- Will need to have access to software that reads and edits Microsoft Word documents and that reads pdfs.

## **GRAMMAR SCHOOL:**

- Teachers will schedule a Zoom kick-off meeting with each class to gather everyone together, explain the distance learning plan, and answer any questions.
- Teachers will have one month of materials available for pick up from Grace on Monday, March 30. Logistical details to follow.
- Teachers will post and email weekly lessons by 9:00 a.m. Monday of each week.
- Teachers have the option to use Zoom to deliver online supplemental teaching. Students do NOT need a Zoom account to join virtual classrooms. Simply click the meeting URL or type in the meeting ID emailed from your teacher to join.
- Teachers will offer daily electronic “office hours” where students can drop in to speak with their teacher via Zoom or by telephone.
- All student work will be turned in electronically, via FACTS Homework Drop. There will be no physical exchange of work after the initial packet drop off.
- Our focus will be on reading, writing, math, history, and Bible. (Realizing that Latin is likely the most difficult subject for parents to assist in, we will not continue with Latin in the distance learning format. We will offer supplemental resources so that students retain vocabulary, and will review and pick up where each class left off the following academic year.)
- Teachers will provide feedback on assessments, but all grades will be Pass/Fail. Grades taken during the campus closure will not count toward students’ year averages.

## **UPPER SCHOOL:**

- Teachers will use Zoom to deliver online classrooms. Students do NOT need a Zoom account to join meetings/classrooms. Simply click the meeting URL or type in the meeting ID emailed to you from your teacher to join online.
- Teachers will offer daily electronic “office hours” where students can “drop in” to speak with their teacher via Zoom or by telephone.
- All student work will be received electronically, via FACTS Homework Drop. There is to be no physical exchange of materials.
- Given the limitations many families will face, we are committed that 2nd semester grade averages cannot go down, but they can go up. In other words, a student who has an “A” should still complete and submit their assignments, but they need not worry about dropping to a “B.” If a student has a grade they wish to improve, their performance during this distance learning program will give them that opportunity. In either case, students will receive feedback on their deliverables and parents will be notified if students fall behind.

In closing, I personally want to acknowledge how encouraged I am by the willingness of our teachers to embrace this challenge. They are truly the backbone of our school and are working tirelessly to ensure you have a positive transition to the distance learning program. Additionally, I have heard from many of you and am equally encouraged that our broader school community is already echoing the enthusiasm and support our teachers have shown. We do ask for your patience and your cooperation...we can't do this without you! We are in this together and we will make progress the remainder of the school year together. As we begin to move forward next week and receive feedback from faculty, parents and students, we may need to make adjustments to the plan, but we do hope they will be minimal. In constant prayer, I'm asking God to keep His arms around our Grace Academy community and bless you, your student, your family and our broader community as we navigate this challenge together.

Soli Deo Gloria.

Andy Cantwell  
Head of School



# GRACE ACADEMY

March 16, 2020

Dear Grace Academy Community,

We are prayerfully committed to the ongoing health and safety of our school family and our community. As you have seen in the news, the issues concerning the spread of the coronavirus (COVID-19) change rapidly. As we carefully review guidance from federal, state, and local officials we want to ensure that your family is supported and prepared for possible scenarios that may arise as a result of the spread of COVID-19.

Grace Academy will extend spring break an additional week (the week of March 23-27) and remain closed as a precaution. We will continue to monitor the situation locally and make a decision by Wednesday, March 25th on whether to reopen Grace Academy beginning March 30th. If we are not able to reopen the school on March 30th, we will transition to remote learning.

We want to assure you that our board, administration, and teachers are committed to offering resources to help your student(s) continue to learn remotely if we are not able to open on March 30th. We do not want to lose the academic momentum we have generated this year, and yet we recognize and want to be sensitive to the challenges that each family may experience with having children at home for an extended time due to a school closure. Our goal would be to strike a balance and we appreciate your help in managing your student's efforts to learn at home during a highly unusual situation. If it becomes necessary, we will provide a detailed learning plan for the grammar, logic, and rhetoric school next week.

Even as we must consider the current situation carefully and apply as much wisdom as we are able, it is more important that we remember that our peace, safety, and hope come from our relationship with Christ and not our circumstances. As a community of faith, committed to historic Christianity, we know that God is sovereign. He still reigns and rules our world in the midst of this crisis. As such, we can rest in the promises of God for his children.

We will send regular communication via email to keep our families informed and updated.

Soli Deo Gloria.

Andy Cantwell  
Head of School