

WOLF WATCH

— WEEKLY E-NEWS —

News for the Week of April 5

All School

A Note from the Head of School, Steve Lovejoy

Happy Sunday St. Francis,

We truly consider our parents as partners in their child's education, and it's never been more evident than right now. Our teachers, staff, and parents have risen to the occasion in true St. Francis style.

Due to the extended stay-at-home order announced this week, St. Francis will continue distance learning through April 30. *Additionally, with this new extension, Easter Monday, April 13, will be a regular school day.*

I know this has shifted many of your roles from parent to teacher in residence and I want to thank you for your continued (and enhanced) partnership as we have navigated the first two weeks of remote instruction at St. Francis. As a community, we remain fully committed to our goals of connection and instructional continuity. Our academic program is robust and always strives to provide more than just tasks for your children. Staying connected through synchronous sessions and class meetings has been joyful and productive, and student work on asynchronous academic tasks has also been impressive and teaches autonomy, responsibility, time-management and other valuable skills.

We appreciate your helpful and validating feedback on the program thus far and the open lines of communication. We will continue to share important information about our goals, expectations for the year, grading, and calendar changes next week in the division head's *Wolf Watch* letters.

Stay well and I am thinking of you all!

Steve

A Note About Digital Chapels

Have you seen our digital Chapels? They include all of your favorite traditions: chimes, music, an encouraging message, prayers, and even birthday celebrations. All students are invited to share prayer requests, plus their art and videos. Fr. Wismer and Rev. Heinemann will use what you share in Chapels. All things Chapel can be found [here](#).

Virtue of the Month: Servanthood

During the month of April, the St. Francis community is focusing on servanthood. Our virtue verse is Matthew 20:26b: "Whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant." Try to memorize it as a family. You can watch [this short video](#) to learn the ASL for "servanthood."

Table Talk: What is the first image or story that comes to mind when you hear the word "servanthood"

At Home With Chef Bryce

Chef Bryce and helpers show us how to make meatballs! [Click here for the video.](#)

Share With Us on Social

We miss seeing our students, so we invite you to help us make this learning as engaging as possible for all! Send us your photos, and connect through social media as one community united. Use the hashtag #SFEStrong and tag us, or [send us your photos via e-mail](#).

Primary School

From the Division Head

I think we've all learned a lot about ourselves with the "stay safe, stay home" directive. While I consider myself an introvert (and sometimes ambivert), I know that my face-to-face relationships are where I am my best self.

I have become grateful for many things during this time. I am acutely aware of how many different people, in many different careers, make our lives both productive and pleasant. I appreciate how people have lifted one another up with hope and encouragement when there is stress adjusting to changes in our lives at work and at home.

When we began planning a distance learning program for our students, we had two goals. We wanted both to offer continuity of instruction for our students and to maintain a sense of connection to our community. While it's not easy for young children to connect to their teachers and friends through a screen, we believe that maintaining these relationships is beneficial for all of us.

I have enjoyed participating in some of our students' class meetings. Seeing the joy in your children's faces when their teachers read a story or sing a favorite song is heartwarming. Morning meetings are planned intentionally to include familiar daily routines. In a time when there is very little that is routine or predictable, even these small things can be comforting to children. They may not understand why they aren't coming to campus for school, but knowing that their teachers, chaplains, and friends are still here keeps them connected to their community. In the Primary School, our relationships are at the heart of our program.

We miss your children. We miss you, and we miss our colleagues. We understand that you are juggling so many new things right now and want you to know how much we appreciate all you are doing to support your children and all of us. We couldn't do it without you.

Take good care,

Amy Whitley, MA
Head of Primary School

Mark Your Calendar

Monday, April 6–Thursday, April 30

- *Distance Learning: Campus closed*
-

Friday, April 10

- *Good Friday Holiday: No school*
-

Monday, April 13

- *Regular School Day (Distance Learning)*
-

Friday, May 1

- *Teachers Return to Campus: Campus closed*
-

Monday, May 4

- *Students Return to School on Campus*

Lower School

From the Division Head

I hope this finds you well and still partially sane!

When we realized that we were, indeed, going to a distance learning platform, the administrative team quickly rallied and developed a detailed plan of action. In our initial e-mail to the community, we outlined our two main goals as we all embarked on this unprecedented journey:

1. **To offer continuity of instruction during prolonged adjustments to our operations**
2. **To provide a sense of connection to the St. Francis community**

First, I want to address **goal #1** and outline what is happening regarding instruction at each grade level:

- All students in Lower School continue to have **morning meetings** with their homeroom community.
- The **enrichment teachers, librarians, and PE department** have uploaded videos and activities for students to do anytime during the day. Some enrichment teachers have provided “extra” activities to challenge and enrich students who have an interest in those areas. Chapel and Alpha Meetings are even continuing in a recorded format. As much as we try, know that it is impossible to recreate a full classroom experience via videos and virtual small-group lessons. When in the classroom, teachers have control over crafting a meaningful learning environment and can react individually to students; unfortunately, that can’t happen as easily online.
- In **kindergarten, first grade, and second grade**, we have had to consider the fact that there is a greater learning curve for the students, as their iPad usage at school is more limited than that of our older students. They have also had to navigate platforms they have never used before. There may be a learning curve for some parents on these platforms, as well. The teachers have had to learn how to create videos, teach live lessons remotely, create and send assignments

via Seesaw, provide meaningful feedback digitally, and the list goes on. This past week, we were able to add in more small-group, live instruction for the students, as well as “Lunch Bunch” for all grades. These small groups are differentiated so that teachers can match lessons to student needs. As time moves forward, small-group work will increase and the assignments will change as students get stronger and more independent in their online skills and abilities.

- In **third and fourth grades**, the students are more independent and are already familiar with both Seesaw and Google Classroom; so, the learning curve for them has not been as steep. They are receiving both live and recorded whole-group instruction and then meeting in smaller, differentiated groups. These students are able to use the “chat” feature in Google Classroom to ask questions or get support from their teachers in a timely manner. These teachers are also holding “office hours” for any students who need additional support or personal assistance.

Secondly, I would like to address **goal #2**, providing a sense of connection to the community. This is what it’s all about. We need each other to get through difficult times.

The teachers and many of you have shared sweet stories about how much your kiddos miss their teachers and friends and how they light up before morning meetings or live lessons. When students join their morning meetings, they get to see their classmates, teachers, administrators, and enrichment teachers. Students who are more tech savvy are stepping in to help their friends as they troubleshoot technology questions. Not only are they happy to help, but they are proud of themselves for being able to help. Their natural inclination to be a “person for others” has been evident as they have assisted their peers.

As soon as students log on to their Zoom sessions, faces light up and smiles are seen in every square. All in all, students are appearing happy and excited to see the familiar, friendly faces of the people in their school family who love them.

We are all so grateful to you, the parents, for your patience and help. It truly takes a village to make distance learning work. We also realize that you have lives and jobs, and time to help your children might be limited. We just ask you to do what you can.

One positive outcome in this unique situation worth mentioning is that teachers have reported they are seeing such independence being fostered in their students. Students are rising to the occasion and demonstrating resilience and determination. Although we strive to assign work they can do independently, we are aware that, at times, your child may need help from you. Encourage them to first try problem-solving independently. We don’t expect you to teach your child, but just to provide guidance. If they need more than just your guidance, please reach out to your teacher. This is an amazing, real-life learning opportunity. Life is not always perfect, and at times, we simply can’t control a situation. We can, however, control how we respond to the situation.

We do sincerely ask that you **please allow your children to complete assessments independently**, as that is the data our teachers use to guide instruction and maintain the differentiation that is so important to the continuation of effective learning.

The good news is that it is getting easier. We have received some amazing, valuable feedback and suggestions from you that we have been able to quickly implement. We are not experiencing what you all are at home, so the suggestions and positive feedback have been extremely helpful.

Our executive administrative team and Lower School administrative/specialist teams meet every day to solve problems that arise during the day. Lower School administrators and specialists also meet with each grade level almost every day to help them with planning and executing the curriculum online. We have continued our weekly grade-level meetings electronically to discuss students and the needs of families. Specialists and administrators are able to join morning meetings and lessons and can assist if support is needed. We are working as hard as we can to learn how to do “school at home.”

We also must remember that many of our teachers have children of their own at home; they are juggling roles just like you. Thank you for understanding that it takes working together to do what's best for our students. Most of all, thank you for the encouraging words that have been coming our way. Working through this together will make our SFES community stronger.

This has brought to light how truly important we are to each other at St. Francis. Families and faculty are the lifeline of our community. Please continue to reach out to share thoughts, ideas, or support.

We also want you to reach out if you need any assistance from us. Head of Student Support Services Laurie Curtis, EdD, wrote the students a lovely letter, [here](#). Please share it with them!

Stay tuned for next week's *Wolf Watch*, where we will address grade-level goals, objectives, and hopes for our future, as well as assessment and calendar items.

Gratefully,

Carol Christ, MEd
Head of Lower School

First- and Second-Grade St. Francis Fund Class Participation Parties Postponed

We hope this news doesn't cause a *meltdown*, but we have hit the brakes on the Ice Cream Truck party. We will work to reschedule it so we can celebrate your strong

participation in the St. Francis Fund! We remain extremely grateful for your support and are so proud of our community. #SFEStrong

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Middle School

From Coach T and Mr. Lakoski

Well, we are back by popular demand! Coach T and myself have decided to take over Middle School *Wolf Watch* once again. Sorry, Mr. Bertha! (He does send his best.) With one full week of distance learning under our belts, it looks like everyone is rising to the challenge of our temporary situation. A few weeks ago, not many of our students even knew what a Zoom meeting was. Now they are experts.

We want to give a huge shout-out to our teachers. Designing, developing, and implementing a virtual learning experience in a matter of weeks has been a Herculean effort. Our community is so grateful for their creativity and willingness to think outside of the box.

The news that school will not resume until May is hard to swallow for all of us. However, we are so blessed to be surrounded by a community that loves and cares for each other. We know that the stress of everyone being home is tough on children and parents alike. If you are in need of a listening ear, or some ideas on how to navigate this time, please reach out to your St. Francis school community. Our counselors (Dr. Curtis and myself), our chaplains (Fr. Wismer and Rev. Heinemann), and our Middle School leaders (Coach T, Ms. Crummel, and Mr. Bertha) are here to help.

Without a doubt, if our school community embraces our mission of being people for others, we will weather this current storm and emerge stronger than ever.

Take care—and remember: God loves you, and so do we!

Go Wolves!

Mr. Lakoski and Coach T

St. Francis Fund Food Truck Celebration for Sixth Grade Postponed

We really wanted to “ketchup” with our sixth graders, but for now we’ve hit the brakes on the Burger Truck party. We will work to reschedule it so we can celebrate your strong participation in the St. Francis Fund! We remain extremely grateful for your support and are so proud of our community. #SFEStrong

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Upper School

A Note From the Division Head

We've almost made it to the two-week mark in our distance learning journey! As a reminder, in my family, we encourage one another to practice patience and compassion (for ourselves and one another) and to resist judgment (of ourselves and one another) when navigating times of change and transition.

The past few weeks definitely qualify as a time of significant change and transition for all of us. I want you to know how much I appreciate the adjustments you are making within your families to ensure continuity of learning and connection to our St. Francis family. I have had the pleasure of speaking with most of you by phone over the past week, and I appreciate the time you spent updating me about how this transition is going for you and your families.

Some of you mentioned that you are enjoying the opportunity to slow down and reconnect as a family. You are getting a glimpse of your children's teaching and learning experiences. You shared that your children seem happy and you frequently overhear laughter while they're in class on Google Hangout or Zoom. Thank you for sharing your experiences and observations with me. Thank you, also, for looking for and finding the silver linings and facilitating opportunities for your children to do the same.

Our relationships and sense of connection to one another are so important. Perhaps that is the case now more than ever. During the last couple of weeks, I have had the opportunity to join some classes, and I am confident that our teacher-student and student-student relationships are thriving, even in an online setting. Kudos to our amazing students and faculty!



Please [click here](#) to read the St. Francis Upper School Online Expectations that were shared with students yesterday. As always, let me know if you have any questions or concerns.

Looking to the upcoming week, please remember that you and your children will still be able to refer to students' St. Francis planners to reference the day (of our six-day rotating block schedule) that we will be following.

The schedule for the upcoming week is below:

WEEK 3 (April 6- 9) of Distance Learning in the Upper School at SFES:

	Time	April 6 Day 4	April 7 Day 5	April 8 Day 6	April 9 Day 1	April 10 (Good Friday)
Block times = synchronous online sessions	8:30- 9:00	Block 4	Block 5	Block 6	Block 1	NO SCHOOL GOOD FRIDAY HOLIDAY
	9:15-9:45	Block 6	Block 1	Block 2	Block 3	
	10:00- 10:30	Block 2	Block 3	Block 4	Block 5	
	10:45- 11:15	Block 8	Block 7	Block 8	Block 7	
	11:30- 12:00		US Faculty Mtg.		US Faculty Mtg.	
	1:00- 1:45	Tutorial 4	Tutorial 5	Tutorial 6	Tutorial 1	
	1:45- 2:30	Tutorial 6	Tutorial 1	Tutorial 2	Tutorial 3	
	2:30-3:15	Tutorial 2	Tutorial 3	Tutorial 4	Tutorial 5	
	3:15- 4:00	Tutorial 8	Tutorial 7	Tutorial 8	Tutorial 7	
	4:00- 4:30	Arts/PE	Clubs	Advisory	Advisory	

***Middle & Upper School Chapels accessible via link on Wednesdays.**

In closing, I want to remind you that you have an ongoing, open invitation to contact your child’s teacher, advisor, or me. We are here for you on the good days and the difficult days. Please reach out whenever you need assistance, support, or guidance.

Sincerely,

Cara Henderson, EdD
Head of Upper School

A Note From the Head of Student Support Services

I hope your first few weeks of distance learning are going well. “Doing school” remotely is new for you—and our teachers—and I encourage you to be flexible as we adapt. You’ve heard it from me, and probably from your teachers and parents, as well, but I

wanted to remind you again about the importance of having a routine during this time that we're away from school. There are so many things you can do to set yourself up for success!

Create a daily schedule—what time are you waking up each day? It's easy to fall into the habit of sleeping late and putting off school work.... Fight that temptation! Save sleeping in for weekends, and try to stick to the regular daily school schedule as closely as possible. Your teachers have Office Hours when they are available during the day, and you will need to take advantage of those opportunities to ask questions, stay in touch, or participate in virtual class meetings.

Here are a few more tips:

- **Create a Workspace (Not Your Bed!)**—Use a desk, a table, or another space in your home that's dedicated to your schoolwork and that's as distraction-free as possible.
- **Get Dressed Every Day**—I know, I know. Hanging out in your PJs all day sounds awesome, but putting on some regular clothes (even uniform tops) helps us shift into a work mindset and be more productive.
- **Move**—Set aside time each day for exercise and/or to get outside if possible. This is guaranteed to boost your mood!

As simple as these things sound, I PROMISE they can have a huge impact on your mental health.

One other thought on this “social distancing” thing: Please remember why we're doing it—for the health and safety of everyone. We want everyone in our families and in our larger community to be as safe as possible. So, while we know you miss your friends and getting together is tempting, let's all do what we can to look out for others as well as ourselves.

Remember that Mr. Lakoski and I are available if you would like to schedule a time to check in and talk.

Enjoy the week ahead!

Take care,

Laurie Curtis, EdD
Head of Student Support Services

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Church

Join Us Online for Holy Week and Easter Services

Visit the [church website](#) for more information on our streaming services.

At 11:00 a.m. on Good Friday (April 10), Fr. Wismer and Mrs. Devlin will lead a Facebook Live Walk to Calvary! Follow the link above to the church website or go to the St. Francis Episcopal Church Facebook page.

*** Please note that the Easter Sunday service will be on Facebook Live at 10:00 a.m. Fr. Wismer will give a children's homily, and Mrs. Devlin is recording the Let It Shine lesson. Please join us!*

Register for the GLOW/Youth Summer Mission Trip—Save the Date!

All middle and high school students are invited to attend the **GLOW mission trip to Galveston, TX, on June 4–7**. [Register online here](#).

- Additional information will be provided after registration is completed.
- This is a great way to earn service hours since we will not be having Week of Wonder (VBS) this summer due to construction!
- With questions, please [e-mail Allison Devlin](#) or [Joanie Kirksey](#).