

March 17, 2020

Dear ACIS Community Members:

As you obviously know by now, in response to Covid-19 and in accordance with direction from local, state and national authorities most of our ACIS schools have or are taking steps to move to online and/or blended instructional platforms for at least the next few weeks. Some have extended spring breaks earlier or later as a part of these plans. The reasons for these measures are to not only safeguard our own ACIS communities, but also play our part in protecting the greater public health. In addition, if we can serve our role in slowing down the spread of Covid-19, we can also assist in preventing our health care system from becoming overwhelmed. Doing so will protect the vulnerable—in our own families, our communities, our nation, and our world. It is in many ways a moral imperative, and these decisions have not been taken lightly.

NONE of our schools or the administrators and teachers who work there WANT to be closed for daily on-campus interaction. They love their work, and they care deeply about their students and their education. In fact, they have been fervently engaged for the last several weeks in extensive planning, training, collaboration, and dedicated work to make alternative modes of education for their students as effective, accessible, and productive as possible. All while also caring for their own families and doing their typical fantastic daily work at our schools.

ACIS has always been a leader in education in Colorado and the nation. This current global challenge offers yet another opportunity for ACIS to lead the way. Yet, as with any effort in our schools and our association, success will require the collective, sustained effort and support of students, teachers, parents, staff, administrators, trustees, and community members. As a result, I ask that all ACIS school members join together to do the following in the weeks ahead:

- Make the plans and times for educational activities outlined by your particular school a FIRST priority for your child as you would a normal school day. Please don't send the message to your child that these activities and expectations are "optional" or "not real school."
- Be intentional about social distancing for both yourselves and your students. Although Covid-19 might not currently present the same degree of threat to the healthy young, the young are still carriers and can transmit to others. Avoid unnecessary travel. This will undoubtedly involve making some difficult parental decisions about the activities you allow by your children. Help them understand this is about serving the greater good and leading the way as a family (and as a community).
- Take care of your health.
- Stay abreast of the directives of local authorities and follow their guidelines.
- Be patient and supportive as your school works through the inevitable hiccups and adjustments this kind of shift in systems will inevitably present. I can assure you from firsthand knowledge that these educators have been and will continue to be working

tirelessly on behalf of their students. They will appreciate your understanding and support.

- When opportunities to consider returning to on-campus activities do eventually present themselves, please also be understanding and supportive of teachers and school leaders as they weigh what will certainly be a myriad of factors. Trust that they will be striving to make decisions that are in the best interest of all members of their school communities under timelines and protocols that can be successful.
- Every challenge is also an opportunity. Take this opportunity to focus on your family and take advantage of the chance to deepen those relationships and simply spend time together. Many of you are likely also restricted to home in your professional lives. View this as a gift of time and put it to the very best possible use.

When I was a Head of School, I would often need to remind myself of the adage, “This too shall pass” during occasional times of difficulty and crisis. I would also strive to focus on what I could learn and how I could be strengthened by the challenges at hand. I believe this will be true in in this case as well. This too will pass eventually, your communities are strong, and your children are resilient. ACIS will continue to provide member schools the support and resources necessary and possible, and collectively we will once again lead the way during these times in Colorado education. My best wishes to all of you.

Sincerely,

Alan Smiley
Executive Director
Association of Colorado Independent Schools