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December 2, 2020

Re: Grades 7-9 Learning from Home

Dear St. Thomas Families,

I hope this letter finds you well as we now begin day 3 of our new online learning reality. We thank you for your grace, perseverance and dedication to learning at a distance. It will continue to require work, but we know you are up for the challenge.

As you are all aware, our teachers spent much of Friday meeting, planning and adjusting the course work and expectations so that they can deliver quality programming to your child. As a school community, we have decided that online teaching will happen asynchronously, with synchronous learning taking place if there is a specific need for live discussion or instruction, or as a strategy to build community among learners. Additionally, teachers, educational assistants and counselors are meeting synchronously with students who can benefit from additional one on one or small group support. This approach has been chosen in an effort to decrease the stress associated with the numerous barriers that exist for families who are required to have their child(ren) online at mandatory times throughout the day. Having said all of this, below are the elements of online at home learning that all students can continue to expect as we move forward.

- A week at a glance will continue to be posted at the beginning of each week and will include the academic plan for each core subject for the week as well as details pertaining to when the teacher will be available for Google Meets, Office Hours, Emails and Phone calls. Please note that in some cases this week at a glance will include all subjects and in other cases an individual week at a glance per subject will be posted within the respective Google Classroom.
- Teachers will post daily reminders of assigned classwork and possible Google Meets, by 9:00am daily, on Google Classroom.
- Every teacher is available everyday for 1.5 hours each morning and 1.5 hours each afternoon for Office Hours. During Office Hours, teachers will provide their students with an open Google Meet code and will be available to work with students one on one, in small groups or in large groups. Some teachers will schedule regular synchronous learning activities that will require students to be online at designated times throughout the day at the teachers discretion. This information will be shared with students from the teacher on an ongoing basis through Google Classroom.
- All teachers are accessible to their students from 9-3:30pm everyday.
- Additionally, all homeroom classes will require their students to be online for non academic Google Meets throughout the week in an effort to have students maintain connection with their classmates and teachers.
- Exploratory option challenges will be provided weekly for students starting the week of December 7th.

- Counselling supports will remain available throughout the school day. Please reach out to our counselling team if you have emergent concerns, and please take time to check out the counselling website which contains contact information, a link to a referral form as well as links to various counselling resources that are available. This website is available at: [STA Counselling Website](#)

As mentioned in the letter that I sent on November 26th, all grade 7-9 students within RDCRS are following the guideline of having students learn for approximately 16 hours per week. This includes the learning/lessons and the time required to complete assignments, activities, and assessments. It is imperative that your child make the effort to engage with the content provided and seek assistance from their teachers whenever necessary. As we move forward in this new reality, we will continue to assess our practices relative to meeting the needs of our students and families.

Lastly, while this is a challenging time, we continue to trust in the Lord with all our heart, leaning on each other for support and companionship. We encourage everyone to look after your mental health, hopefully you will all have the opportunity to get outside to enjoy the warm weather.

Thank-you for your support as we continue to navigate the unique challenges that our new reality presents.

Yours in Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'I Stang', written in a cursive style.

Ian Stang
Principal