



Hello TMI!

This is Fr. Scott Brown coming to you from TMI on our beautiful campus. Behind me is the football field where next week, we will celebrate the class of 2020 with a graduation ceremony. I'm so excited to see them and to welcome them and their families to campus for this exciting day. Two weeks ago, I came to you with an update for reopening school and committed to giving you updates every two weeks thereafter as we prepare to come back to campus in August. Today is my next update for you.

I want to remind you that coming back to campus is our priority. We are planning to be here on August 20th and we are planning to stay on campus the entire semester. But in order to do that, we have to be safe. I want to update you on a few of the things that we're doing to make sure that we can come back to campus safely. One of the things I want to make you aware of, TMI, is that we sent out a survey last week and almost 300 individuals completed that survey. We asked a variety of questions about your concerns regarding coming back to campus. One thing that was clear to all of us on this campus, is that 92% of our families said that if COVID-19 conditions remain as they are today, you want your students back on campus. *We* also want our students on campus August 20th, and if conditions remain the same, I can tell you that – as a parent and as the Head of School – I wholeheartedly agree with that. I want our students back. I want my own children back. I want us back on campus on August the 20th, and we agree on that.

The majority of us also agree on things like hand sanitizer, protocols for checking fevers, and safety checks at the Welcome Center. We agree on a lot of things about coming back to campus, but masks – on the other hand – is where opinions differ. On Wednesday, Bexar County Judge Nelson Wolff announced his new Executive Order mandating that businesses require customers and employees to wear masks where it is difficult to keep six feet away from other people or working in close proximity. TMI will require masks, not just because it's mandated, but because the science behind it shows that wearing a mask slows down the spread of the virus. Being on campus is priority number one and if in order to be on campus we have to wear masks, then we're wearing masks. I'm telling you this now because there are passionate views on both sides of the mask conversation.

The survey also identified a few other things that are on your mind. One of those is the economic impact around COVID-19. You may have experienced an economic impact in your own family and I can tell you that it's affected TMI as well. We have a lot to glean from your survey responses and we ask that you give us a little time to take that feedback to be able to share with

you what we've learned from it. My initial take away from the survey, however, is that the things you're tracking, we're tracking; the things that you're questioning, we're following; the things that you're suggesting, we've thought about. So that's good news to me, because it shows that we're tracking the things that you are tracking.

I want to talk about finances for a little bit. Earlier this week, you received an email from the Business Office telling you that we're shifting from FACTS to SchoolAdmin for the billing software. Be on the lookout for emails from SchoolAdmin in the coming weeks. Speaking of finances, I want to again recognize the financial impact that COVID-19 has had on our economy – including both you and TMI – as we prepare for next school year. Episcopal Schools are nonprofit schools and as such, our budgets are positioned as break-even budgets. Our expenses for next year are set and a large majority of those expenses go directly to personnel costs; we cannot continue to provide academic growth and student success without our amazing faculty and staff. So we're committed to supporting them. We're committed to compensating them. Regardless of whether we have remote instruction, those costs don't change.

In addition to personnel costs, we have utilities and vehicles to pay and a number of fixed costs. Our maintenance and facilities teams still show up on campus and keep this place beautiful, whether our students are here or not. Our expenses are set, and while there will be minimal savings in areas such as food or travel, there are new increased expenses around things like sanitation and safety. I want you to know that I understand the questions you asked about our school finances, which is why I invite any of you to reach out to me and have a conversation. TMI is not wasteful, we are committed to good stewardship of our financial resources and I'm happy to talk to you about those decisions.

As many of you know, I'm a parent at TMI as well. My sons are entering 9th and 12th grade, but I also recognize that I can't appeal to you as a fellow TMI parent, because I am admittedly a biased TMI employee. So I want to also remind you that I have a daughter who's at a different Episcopal Independent School in town. She's a fourth grader now and I love my daughter's school. I receive updates from their administration regularly. I'll admit that some of those updates I agree with, some of them leave me scratching my head, and while some of the updates from her school are crystal clear, there are some that are still quite vague. Like TMI, there's a lot at my daughter's school that is still very unknown.

My daughter's school doesn't know exactly what August will look like and all of my questions about her school experience for next year have not yet been answered. However, I continue to

support my daughter's school, both financially and emotionally. I do so because I believe in the things that her school believes in and I know that paying my daughter's tuition, regardless of what next year looks like, allows her school to keep their amazing faculty and to keep paying the expenses that don't go away whether they're on campus or not. The bottom line is, I trust the leadership of her school and I value the things that her school values. I believe in her school's mission. I've seen the results of the graduates from her school. I know how prepared her classmates who have graduated from her school are for TMI and for the world. So because of all that, I'm in. I support her school. Am I nervous? You bet I am. Am I anxious? Sure. Am I curious? Yes, but I'm in.

Would I like a discount on my tuition that I pay for her school? It would be nice. I bet you'd like one, too. But I understand the sacrifices that Independent Schools like hers and ours must make in order to make our expenses work. I understand that cutting expenses and refunding part of the tuition to families would require us to cut the very things that you love and value most about our community, including our amazing teachers and coaches, our extracurricular programs, and our commitment to the heart of each student. So in short, it's not worth it to me and I bet it's not worth it to you either.

Let me shift away from finances and talk about academics. As we prepare for the opening on August 20th, I want to remind you about our Academic Response Team that consists of educators and physicians who know our school, understand the science behind COVID-19, and are committed to keeping our entire community safe. I trust this team. They're developing guidelines, practices, procedures, schedules, and policies that work for TMI and I encourage you to trust them as well. While we're committed to having school on campus as much as possible, this team is working on a variety of schedules for the varying scenarios that we may face throughout the year, including a daily schedule that would take into account how we manage health and safety requirements while keeping the day as normal as possible.

We already know that some things like Chapel or lunch will look very differently, but we're confident that for most of our academic day, we can minimize the disruptions. If, and I repeat if, we're required to stay home and go to a fully online school day – along with every other school in our area – I'm telling you, the Academic Response Team has created schedules that will combine regularly scheduled classes with teachers that will meet with your students multiple times per week and allow extra time available for tutorial and help sessions. As much as we do not want to go to remote instruction. If we do, it will be very different from the way you encountered it last spring. It will look much more like a normal school day. This week, the



Academic Response Team continued working on maximizing spaces all around this beautiful campus, including thinking about how we can reuse some spaces. They measured every room and we're now calculating how many students we can safely fit in a room in order to practice social distancing. That number, which we will have very soon, will shape a lot more decisions just around the corner.

In closing, I want to remind you that I will have another update for you in two weeks, just before the July 4th weekend. I'm confident that the closer we get to August 20th, the more concrete and practical updates will be. For now, if you're wanting to know exactly what our plans are for August 20th, let me recap:

- We are coming back to school August 20th.
- We will be practicing social distancing.
- We will be wearing masks.
- We will wash hands often.
- We will require health screenings.
- We will be prepared for whatever curveball comes our way.

Coming back to school in August is going to happen, but it's going to require awareness, discipline, and teamwork. But, it is going to happen, TMI. I love you. I pray for you. I pray that your families are healthy, happy, and safe and I look forward to seeing you soon. My next academic update will be in two weeks. Until then, take care and God bless.

The Rev. Scott J. Brown

Husband to Kimberly

Father to Parker, Christopher and Angelene

Spurs Fan

Golf Fanatic

Head of School