Dear parents,

As I am sure you are all aware, the COVID-19 virus has been spreading at alarming rates. This particular virus has not appeared to be especially dangerous to large portions of the population. Still, its highly contagious nature has called for appropriate action to be taken in an effort to stop the rapid spread. I am sure you have noticed that many public events that involve a large gathering of people have been cancelled or postponed. It is no surprise then, that this has now affected the education sector.

On Thursday, March 12, the province of Ontario issued the following statement: “The minister of education has issued a ministerial order to close all publicly funded schools in Ontario for two weeks following March break in response to the emergence in Ontario of COVID-19. This means that Ontario publicly funded schools have been ordered to remain closed from March 14 through to April 5, 2020.”

The Administration and Board talked on Thursday evening and then met on Friday morning to discuss an appropriate way forward. We are deferring a decision until next week. We will closely monitor the situation throughout the coming days, but we want parents to be aware that there is a strong possibility that we will follow the same directives that the province of Ontario has given to public schools regarding this situation and close from March 14 to April 5. There is also a distinct possibility that in the coming days the decision will be taken out of our hands and we will be mandated by the government to take an extended school break.

This would be extremely inconvenient for all involved. However, as we consider our responsibility to our communities and the message we portray by our actions, we decided that it is only appropriate for us to be prepared to follow this directive as well. The decision to close schools across Ontario is being made by professionals who are attempting to curb the spread of this virus. We do not want to be presumptuous and carelessly ignore professional recommendations, which, although extremely inconvenient for them as well, are being given with the good of society in mind.

If the decision is made to close the school following March Break, we would intend to continue to provide some assignments for our students throughout the two weeks of March 23 to April 3. For that reason, your students’ books were sent home with them today. These assignments would vary greatly depending on the grade level. Grades 9-12 should expect a fairly significant amount of work in an effort to stay as close to on schedule as we can. The lower the age of the student, the more difficult it becomes to keep them moving forward together academically in a work-on-your-own environment. Younger grades may expect more review types of opportunities as well as reading assignments. We want our students to take a March Break; unplug from school and enjoy your week! If we do close, homeroom teachers will communicate, through email, some direction as it pertains to student assignments. Again, these expectations will vary greatly depending on the age of the student. We invite questions throughout this process. All staff can be reached at their personal school email addresses.

This is clearly an unforeseen, unprecedented, and highly inconvenient situation for all of us. Some of the public are responding to this virus with a cynical and nonchalant disregard. Many others are responding with paralyzing fear. Neither are appropriate responses. We want to do our part to stem the spreading of a highly contagious disease, even while understanding that the virus is not particularly dangerous to huge portions of our population. We ask for your continued support and understanding as we attempt to make wise choices. We continue to monitor all updates and will be in further communication with you sometime throughout the middle of next week.

Sincerely,

[school information redacted]