

April 22, 2020



Dear Parents,

Greetings and Easter blessings to all of you and your families! I pray that you are finding God in new and meaningful ways following Easter Sunday and the beautiful celebration of Divine Mercy Sunday! As the apostles could not recognize Jesus when he revealed Himself to them after His resurrection, I pray that, during this pandemic, we may also find ourselves seeking and being reintroduced to God in new and inspiring ways.

Our ongoing “Groundhog Day” experience with the COVID-19 shelter-in-place order is certainly making time, days, and weeks run together. I know that the transition to distance learning has been stressful for our students, parents, and faculty members. I am hopeful that, as we hit some academic rhythm with student work, a sense of routine is starting to make its way into your homes. Routine is so healthy for students...and adults!

I want to update all of you on a few areas that I know many families are concerned about:

- **Finances:** The school is an arm of the Church, and as such, you can count on the school and Church to partner with your family, ensuring that you will be supported through any financial crisis you may face as a result of the COVID 19 pandemic. Our support is not hypothetical, and it will not be trivial, it will be substantive. I accentuate this point because I am sure that many families are facing significant financial stress at this time. While we do not have an endless amount of aid, our Church is staunch in its commitment to make a Catholic education available for each and every family who participates in a healthy partnership with the schools. We will treat each family situation on a case-by-case basis, and our aid to families will be accessible through our tuition assistance program. As in years past, our first priority is to accommodate ALL families who are regular Mass attendees.
- **Prepaid Accounts:** Some families have prepaid for preschool tuition and/or school lunches. We will be offering three options for families that have prepaid for these areas: 1) Roll over your current balance to the 2020-21 school year; 2) receive a refund from the school by the end of the first week of May; or 3) if your household finances have remained healthy, consider donating your balance to the school’s *Perseverance Fund*, which is specifically designated to help families needing help as a result of our current situation.
- **Prepaid Preschool Tuition:** All prepaid preschool tuition will be credited back to your family account for April and May. We will retain tuition from the end of March, the same as we fund the end of every preschool year to have the teachers finish out their classrooms along with all end of year maintenance and custodial needs. You will be able to find your updated balance in RenWeb by the end of this week.
- **Prepaid Lunch Money:** All prepaid lunch money for students in preschool through grade 12 will be credited to your account. You will be able to find your updated balance in RenWeb by the end of this week.
- **CORRECTION/CLARIFICATION ** UPDATED 4/23 ****
 - **For students in Kindergarten through 5th Grade**, lunch money was pre-paid with your tuition. In consideration of the lunches not used, you will receive a credit to your RenWeb account which will typically be \$125 (less for those who receive free/reduced lunch).
 - **Families with students in grades 6-12** may view your school lunch balance on your **SendMoneyToSchool.com** account. Since these accounts typically do not carry large balances, rather than utilize school resources to issue minor refunds, we will carry these amounts forward to the fall. However, if needed, you may request a check or transfer credit to go toward other fees from Deb Quinlan at dquinlan@gtacs.org. No refund or transfer for balances under \$25.

- **End of School Year:** Our leadership team has been listening to parents and students in regard to the taxing nature of distance learning. We are coupling that information with the reality of the students' need to acquire enough knowledge to be academically successful in the fall. With all factors considered, we feel that we can best serve our students with the final day of the school year being held on Friday, May 29, 2020.

Thank you so much for your patience with the school. There is no doubt that many families are learning more and more about the virtue of patience these days. I know I am! ☺ May God bless your family abundantly in this Easter season of Hope and Joy, which only He can provide.

Know of my prayers,

Michael R. Buell
Superintendent, Grand Traverse Area Catholic Schools