



Dear Saint Mary's Families,

Thank you for bringing your child down to Saint Mary's to pick up books and log in to Microsoft Teams. It was heartening to see such a quick response from our families as we move to distance learning. It was a great testament to how the families of Saint Mary's respond in times of need. Further, the faculty and staff have mobilized quickly and in a very short time to make distance learning a reality. We are truly blessed to have such families and colleagues who are committed to Catholic education. I am sure that we will have bumps ahead, but I am confident we will navigate these with faith, hope, and charity.

We hope to continue to provide a good learning experience in this modified format and create some degree of normalcy. We even might find some unintended benefits about learning being done in the home. Families might find more opportunities to dialogue about some of the rich curricular content that is taught in our classes.

As you know, things are changing rapidly, so please be understanding as we make this transition. If you need help, we are setting up links at www.wearesm.org and www.smknights.org for you or your child to submit help requests. Direct questions about assignments and classes to teachers themselves and tech problems to the links on our website. If you have limited access to internet, please see the attached document regarding Cox's offer to supply internet or read about the program [here](#).

Microsoft Teams will be the primary platform that we will be using to proceed with distance learning for the next two weeks or longer if need be. I have attached a Parent and Student guide to this email. Students may log in to Microsoft Teams at www.office.com using the log in and password information that they received when picking up their books. Students may download a Microsoft Teams app to their phone, but a desktop computer or laptop is the preferred device for class activities. There are some advantages with the phone app, as it is easier to upload pictures and videos. Further, your student now has access to other Microsoft Online products on a desktop or through your phone. They can be found by clicking on the 9 little dots in the upper left-hand corner of the screen when logged in to Microsoft Online. Here are the primary ones.

1. **Microsoft Teams Online** – the primary platform for communicating and submitting assignments. All classes should appear automatically once the teacher has activated the class. Though grades can be assigned to assignments in Teams, PowerSchool will still be the primary resource for up-to-date student grades.
2. **Microsoft Word Online** – the online version is available for student use, particularly for writing papers, and should be used rather than Google Docs as it will interact better with the Microsoft Teams platform.
3. **Microsoft Outlook Online** – the online version is available for student use when emailing teachers. Your child now has an email address associated with their log in for Microsoft Teams and ending with @smknights.org. It will be best to email teachers through this new email address rather than Gmail or other emailing platforms.

Student expectations will be as follows:

- Students will be expected to work daily for a limited amount of time – Not all student work will need to be done while online (reading and annotating, pen and paper assignments, sketchbooks, etc.)
- Students should log in to every class, every day, in order to keep up on work and assignments.
- Teachers will stagger the due dates of assignments and quizzes/tests to minimize work piling up on a certain day of the week.
- Due to the nature of the classes, Seat of Wisdom and Mathematics may have assignments due every weekday. Theology, World Languages, and Science will have assignments due at maximum two days each week. Fine Arts and other electives will only have assignments due on one day of the week.
- Students will not be required to log in at certain times. Other than teacher office hours learning will be asynchronous. There will be no virtual or live classes.
- Maximum work time shouldn't exceed two hours per week for most classes (4 hours per week for Seat of Wisdom).
- Students will be expected to communicate with teachers via chat (through Microsoft Teams) or email (through Microsoft Outlook) when they have questions. Teacher online office hours will be 9-10 am and 1:00-2:00 pm each weekday, and other times by appointment.

I would like to offer these practical suggestions for how you can help your students stay disciplined and on task during these times.

1. **Create a schedule** – Set a time when your child should wake up and begin working on school work. I suggest getting them up at a reasonable time, making them get dressed. If you are really hard core and a little sadistic, maybe an SM uniform. You could make some money by assigning a summons. If you have multiple children, schedule which child has the computer at what times. Schedule these times in the morning and early afternoon so that in the afternoon, they can go outside, mow your lawn, or dig a random hole in your backyard.
2. **Create a space** – Students need a space to work on school work that is open, free of clutter, in a common area of the house, and quiet. Create this space for your child. Work done on a device in the child's room might mean a good nap or binge watching of Netflix. Remember, not all work needs to be done on the computer. Students doing math work at the dining room table is a beautiful thing.
3. **Monitor and dialogue** – One of the unintended, but good effects of this challenge is that families will be more engaged in their own child's education. Ask questions: What did you do today? Tell me about it. Show me your sketchbook or tell me about *Crime and Punishment* by Dostoevsky. I bet you would be impressed with what your children could teach you about theology or science.

Finally, we will all have a learning curve during these times. We have asked our teachers to be generous and thoughtful about what they are asking students to do, and we ask the same of you. I am confident that your child will continue to learn, but more importantly, we will all continue to develop the virtues that are at the heart of our mission.

Sincerely in Christ,
Mr. James Atkinson
Assistant Principal of Academics
Saint Mary's Catholic High School