



Friday, March 20

Dear NGFS Community,

One of the cornerstones of an NGFS education is Meeting for Worship. Each week our students and staff are provided with the time and space to listen, reflect, settle, and be still. This week the citizens of our country, along with our global neighbors are being asked to be still while unsettling information swirls about us. Contradictions are difficult for adults and even harder for our young people.

This morning our MS and US students participated in various forms of Meeting for Worship. (Meeting for Worship for students in Lower School will begin next week.) For some it was a powerful experience, for others it was a welcome respite from a barrage of scary news. We learned a great deal about what is worrying our students and we were moved, though not surprised by their concern for families, friends, and their NGFS community.

Remote learning for students began this week and while it wasn't without a few hiccups, students, families, and staff worked together to make sure all students were able to participate. From the start, our teachers and staff have been committed and creative, dedicated to mobilizing a remote learning plan that was at once comforting and challenging. They embraced new modes of instruction but without losing sight of our Polaris, the north star that guides all of our work; cultivating an inclusive community that honors and develops each person's gifts. Maintaining connections is essential to who we are as a school and relationships are central to our sense of community. While how we hold onto the values of connection and relationships will change as we embark on this new way of teaching and learning, we are talented, creative, resilient, and kind and I am confident that we will care for each other.

Many of our older students are frustrated by not knowing how long this will last. We have assured them that none of us know that answer and that as soon as we do, we will inform the community. When we initially announced that NGFS would be transitioning to remote learning we stated that it would be for a period of two weeks because that is what health officials deemed as most prudent at the time. It is possible, however, that we will be teaching and learning in this mode for longer. That decision will be made or informed by local, state, and federal government officials. Because we knew that the situation might change we have shifted from the sprint of the last ten days; now, we are preparing for a marathon but hoping we will be back together soon. Marathons require different skills and our staff and teachers are adjusting, knowing that we need to pace ourselves, hydrate, refuel, support, and encourage each other. No one runs a marathon alone.

As the near future holds more questions than answers, the flexible mindset muscles we have built will serve us well. We are in fact, launching a new model of operations, and like all innovative organizations, we must assess, pivot, act, and adapt. There will be missteps, it is inevitable. For our staff, students, and families our focus is on patience, not perfection. This is an uncertain time, and we are ALL being stretched to embrace new and hopefully somewhat exciting things in the face of short timelines and steep learning curves. Nonetheless, NGFS is a

strong and resilient community, we know that our shared commitment to each other will see us through.

Moving forward, in recognition that time away from screens is fundamental to our well-being as students, educators, and families, I ask you to understand that our faculty, staff, and administrators will be observing limited time online. Please be mindful that the stresses you may be experiencing working at home with remote learners, and partners also working at home, are common to many of us. Respectfully, I ask you to understand that our teammates will not be required to answer emails between 4 p.m. and 9 a.m. on weekdays, and not at all on Saturdays and Sundays. Sleep, hydration, nutrition, and exercise – like time spent outside and/or with our families – keep all of us healthy, balanced, and able to care for each other with attention, creativity, generosity, and grace.

Please join me in holding those affected by this illness in the Light. We are cognizant of the sacrifices being made on the part of first responders, the medical community, and those who keep the vital services on which we depend, up and running.

Thank you for your ongoing patience and support as we all work together for the health, safety, and well-being of everyone in our community.

Kim