

FLS Update - April 24, 2020

Tuition. Yes, I said it.

The global pandemic of the coronavirus and the subsequent closure of schools (not to mention much of life as we knew it!) has us all questioning how any of our “normal” obligations or responsibilities ought to continue. Put another way: “What is fair?”

I am not entirely sure how to answer the question regarding how tuition should be dealt with given the governor’s mandated school closure. I agree with many who have expressed that the contractual agreement committed to when enrolling at Faith is not the same as what students are experiencing now with remote learning. However, there is another side to the equation; teachers are struggling as well. We feel a deep-seated responsibility to serve our students and families with our best effort and abilities. Although we have been removed from the environment we are most comfortable and accustomed to for accomplishing this task, we have adjusted and continue to adapt in order to fulfill this responsibility.

I feel it is important to share that the motivation driving this responsibility is rooted in being cared for by God. Yes, it is our job, but it is more about relationship than earning a paycheck. Faith teachers love their students because they are loved and cared for by the Creator of the universe. Each of them struggles greatly with not being able to deliver the educational product they had envisioned at the beginning of this school year. Yet the staff/faculty at Faith is working more hours than ever to maintain Faith’s side of the enrollment agreement; to deliver a quality education in a loving environment that will allow every student to succeed.

My point is this: None of us was given a choice to be in this situation. It’s not simple or easy for any of us.

I share this information not to make light of or downplay anyone’s needs. I am in no position to understand what is happening in any of your family’s lives at the moment, so I would not presume to tell anyone what they need or don’t need. I just know that in my “human-ness” it has always been, and remains to be, easy for me to have a limited perspective; to only see how difficult situations affect *me*. The present circumstances may present the most difficult struggle any of us will ever deal with, so I understand that we are focused on basic needs and self-preservation. I would love to set a precedent for how Faith will deal with tuition for all our families that is equitable while allowing Faith, as a business organization, to remain sustainable as well. Unfortunately, I am experiencing the same issue everyone is dealing with these days: there is no way of knowing how any of this is going to finally work out. There are no simple or clear-cut answers.

So . . . I am totally open to discussing individual family needs rather than apply a “one-size-fits-all” approach to dealing with tuition, especially as it impacts student engagement. Our teachers want to remain connected to their students. If money is an issue, then we, at Faith, would rather have students remain engaged in relationship and their learning than not be involved at all. Please know that I have been and continue to pray for God’s guidance for how to serve the needs of families in this situation while also allowing this ministry to continue serving students both now and into the future. As a nonprofit organization, Faith is completely reliant on tuition and the donations of people who see the value of offering such an educational ministry.

The federal loan application Faith submitted to our bank is still in process. Many of you may know that the initial funding to support these loans was completely depleted in a short period of time. Congress approved more funding for these programs yesterday, so, although there is still hope to obtain this assistance, it is certainly not a guarantee that Faith will be granted such a loan. If this assistance is obtained, the Faith school board will discuss the possibility of granting tuition relief to families. To give such assistance in the equitable manner it must be offered is not possible with the number of unknown facets involved at this time.

Finally, I want to thank you, our Faith families. Your dedication and commitment to partnering with the staff and faculty at Faith ensures the continuation of your child's private school experience. Having our students, your children, know they are loved, cared for, and encouraged to stretch the potential God has gifted each of them with is the true value of such an experience.

I strongly believe this is the essence of why you enrolled your child(ren) at Faith. You wanted something public schools are not always able to provide. A connection beyond just knowledge or content. You wanted your child to have a context for knowledge; an understanding of whose they are and, as a result, what they will become.

God's Peace!
Mr. Neumiller

Up Next Week: The Issue of "Grading" during this closure.

Faith Lutheran School Coronavirus updates: (Please note new items are in red font.)

- FLS office hours will be Monday – Friday; 9:00am to 1:00pm until further notice.
- **The church is collecting items for the rummage sale which has been postponed until October. All donations must be clean, sorted and in sellable condition.** Please bundle toys that belong together in zip lock bags. Items can be donated at the community center (gym building). It will be open Wednesdays from 11:00 – 3:00 until the *Stay Home Stay Safe* order is lifted. Contact **Becky** in the church office at churchoffice@faithcampus.org with questions.
- The school auction scheduled for May 16, 2020 has been canceled. All donations received to date will be transferred to the May 15, 2021 auction. Please contact the school office at flsoffice@faithcampus.org with any questions pertaining to auction details.
- If you purchased lunches in March after the 15th, please email the school office at flsoffice@faithcampus.org to let us know whether you would like a refund or would like to make a donation of that amount.
- Some of you may have placed an online order for spring pictures before school was closed. We contacted LifeTouch and they said, "All online orders for picture days that were canceled were issued refunds last month (March), in anticipation that this might happen." If you placed an order and did not receive a refund, please contact Patty Pio at patty.pio@lifetouch.com.
- Families experiencing financial hardship during this unprecedented school closure due to loss of income, please contact Mr. Neumiller.

Washington State Superintendent of Public Instruction - Coronavirus updates:

Very important information:

The lessening of restrictions for the benefit of the economy will likely NOT include returning to school. Student-to-student proximity in classrooms is far more close or dense than almost any other work environment. The gains in slowing the spread of the coronavirus outbreak would be soon lost if social distancing were not extremely gradual. Returning students and teachers to classrooms would be the least gradual method of lessening quarantine restrictions. This fact has medical and governmental leaders even cautious about the return to classrooms in the fall.

Washington Federation of Independent Schools - Coronavirus updates:

Early Learning Programs Reopen?

Childcare is ongoing at some schools, but not without complications. Currently, childcare programs are allowed to be open, even for care of 5-12 year olds, but many private schools are choosing not to open.

Childcare programs that tried to stay open often found themselves without students or teachers. Parents have not wanted, for the most part, to have their children in care--even essential workers.

For many children, school is the safest place for them to be. Private schools have tried to accommodate family needs, but it has not been easy.

Without proper safety gear, food or supplies and with slow state guidance, there has been a lot of guess work. There is also a lot of fear. Programs cannot afford to be open under the new 10 people to a classroom rule. They also cannot afford to pay their teachers if their program is closed. There are teachers who are at high risk and cannot work; there are students at high risk who cannot attend.

Some programs have created online educational opportunities, however young children often find it challenging to be online for any substantial amount of time.

WFIS is advocating for creative funding to help early learning programs survive this crisis. Funding will be necessary to keep the childcare system afloat. High quality programs will close without financial support.

We are working with DCYF, the Department of Health, and other advocacy organizations. WFIS has signed on to several letters to the Governor asking for support for our early learning programs.

General Coronavirus Resources:

- [WA State Department of Health - Coronavirus webpage](#)
- [Centers for Disease Control - Coronavirus webpage](#)
- [CDC - Resources for Home webpage](#)