Dear Northstar Families,

Since the World Health Organization designated the coronavirus (COVID-19) a pandemic, the last 48 hours have been a truly unprecedented time for our country and we continue to monitor the situation locally, nationally, and globally.  As the safety of our students, families and staff is a priority, I want to share there are presently no identified cases of coronavirus in the Northstar community.  I also want to provide an update to previously shared plans.

Effective Monday, March 16, 2020, Northstar Academy (both campuses) will be closed for students through Friday, March 27, 2020.  No extended day will be provided during this closure.  As we return to school, we will suspend all off campus activities (e.g. field trips, community based instruction, etc.).

For our Career Academy families, we remain in communication with our community partners to share not only our plans, but to also gather information related to their plans for employees.  As events continue to evolve, we will make changes to our long term plans as needed.  Additionally, Mrs. Peele, Director of Career Academy, will send additional follow up with changes to our “Hireability” event.

Absences – Thank you for your continued communication regarding your student’s attendance.  Please know we certainly understand your concerns during this time.  We are following guidance from the Virginia Department of Education (VDOE) and all absences effective today, March 13, 2020 through Friday, March 27, 2020 will be excused.

Medication – Northstar staff on both campuses will be available March 16-18, 7:30 am – 3:30 pm if any family needs to pick up their student’s medication.

Distance Learning - We just received updated guidance from VDOE this morning.  Based on this guidance, we are asking all of our families to complete this quick [survey](https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSf3i3BzSHJYWmaWUJfoUP5SgeDa5pjGvn4Vcn_8n9I1PSOKGw/viewform)  to determine your ability to access an online learning environment.  This will help guide our planning.  As our faculty continue to prepare for distance learning and we continue to monitor guidance from the VDOE, our teachers are preparing packets of information for our students.  Those packets will be mailed to parents Thursday, March 19, 2020.  We ask students use this time off to complete the packets and return completed work when we return to school Monday, March 30, 2020.

Gala – We have made the decision to cancel our 2020 Gala Under the Northstar Star, planned for Friday, March 27. If you have any questions or would like to explore your options regarding your gala sponsorship, ticket purchase, or donation, please call me at 804-747-1003 x1007 or email lrobinson@northstaracademy.net.

Travel abroad and throughout the US & Spring Break - If you have any impending travel planned, it's important to become familiar with the [CDC's guidance and travel warnings](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/travelers/index.html).  They recommend avoiding nonessential travel.  If you travel to a Level 3 country (China, Iran, Italy and South Korea), the CDC says:  "[You should] stay home for a period of 14 days from the time you left an area with widespread or ongoing community spread."  We ask that you follow guidance:

* Travel to a Level 3 country:  Please practice social distancing and stay home (ie. “self-quarantine”)
* Travel to a Level 2 country:  We strongly ask you to consider practicing social distancing only.
* Travel to a domestic area where community transmission has been identified:  We strongly ask you to consider practicing social distancing.

Here are links to some of the sites we have been monitoring on a regular bases.  [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html), [Virginia Health Department](http://www.vdh.virginia.gov/surveillance-and-investigation/novel-coronavirus/), [World Health Organization](https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019).

Thank you for your patience and flexibility during this difficult time.  Together, we will continue to face these challenges on a day by day basis.  We will remain in communication with families and share information regarding any changes.  Please know, we continue to make decisions based on the best interests, health and safety of our students, families and staff.