



September 16, 2020

Dear Parents,

I am writing to provide an update on the status of the criminal case against the former cross country coach for our school, and on the steps we are taking to address the troubling questions raised by this heartbreaking betrayal of trust. Aaron Rios was arrested August 18th and has been charged with six felony counts related to the sexual abuse of one of our student athletes. He had resigned from his position by the time of his arrest, and he will not return to our school in any capacity.

Since then, our focus has been on seeing to the needs of the victim of these crimes and on trying to understand how this abuse could have occurred despite the safeguards we have in place to keep our students safe.

As you know, our school already has in place a strict system of guidelines and safeguards. Every coach and volunteer is thoroughly screened, and we train our staff to be vigilant, vocal guardians of our students. Every adult involved in teaching or coaching our students is trained to speak up at even seemingly minor concerns involving boundaries and student safety. In this case, the coach's crimes were uncovered because parents and a staff member did exactly that.

I share the following facts about the case with the consent of those responsible for prosecuting it:

- At this time, we are aware of one victim of abuse. We have asked anyone with information that could help us discover if there are additional victims to please contact law enforcement and/or our school.
- Based on what we know at this time, the abuse appears to have occurred in July/August 2020, and not in a St. Francis program or at a St. Francis event/ venue, but at events run by the former coach's private running club. However, because there was a level of crossover between this club and our school's team, and because our student was the victim, we are treating this case with the same attention we would if it had occurred within our program.
- As we understand it, Mr. Rios was released from the Sacramento County Jail on September 6th, having posted bail. We understand a condition of his release is that he have no contact with the victim of this crime or her family. We have since contacted Mr. Rios directly to insist that he have no contact with any of our students, families or alumnae.

Now we must examine if there are ways we could have detected a problem before abuse occurred. We have conducted numerous interviews with staff who had contact with this former coach and have searched for any warning signs any of us here could have missed. We also are re-examining the way sports and coaching are supervised and trying to determine if there are improvements we can make that would better protect our athletes.

All of these are ongoing and potentially lengthy processes. I see this work as something we must do continually and for as long as we are trusted with the well-being of young people. We must continually work to improve how we carry out our greatest responsibility to our girls and to you, who entrust your children to us.

This constant effort may not lend itself to easy solutions or quick remedies. The realities of a criminal investigation and prosecution may also limit the information I can share about the alleged crimes themselves, as we must absolutely avoid any action on our part that could complicate the efforts to seek justice in this case and prosecute the former coach. I will, however, keep you informed of all that we do to continually earn the trust of students, parents and our community.

Please know that nothing has greater importance to me at this time than seeing to the well-being of the victim of these crimes. We are also focused on supporting the students on the cross country team and any others who are wrestling with this betrayal of trust by one of the adult leaders at our school. And finally, we are committed to learning all we can in order to better protect our students. I will continue these efforts and I will, to the best of my ability, share whatever information I can with you as we move forward.

I ask you once again to join me in praying for all victims of sexual abuse and for all whose trust in those meant to care for them has been betrayed. Please do not hesitate to reach out to me with questions or concerns.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Theresa Rodgers". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Theresa Rodgers
President