



April 19, 2020

Dear St. Patrick School Families,

I pray that this Sunday letter finds you and your family doing well. I would like to express my sympathies to those of you who have been directly impacted by Covid-19. Our extended school family has lost several individuals and they, as well as their families, are in our thoughts and prayers.

Today, I have several updates to share with you regarding our current school and eLearning situation.

School Closure

Governor Murphy announced that New Jersey schools will remain closed at least until May 15. The faculty, staff and I remain hopeful that conditions will continue to improve and that our students will be able to return to school. However, we do understand that the Governor and the Department of Health may choose to close the schools for the remainder of the year. As such, we are making preparations for all possible scenarios.

LIVE Morning Prayer

I have asked the students to join me for a livestream of Morning Prayer on Monday, April 20 at 8:15AM. The link to join has been emailed to each of them. Once they click on the link to join the Google Meet, we ask that they mute themselves. I look forward to sharing this morning ritual with them in a new way!

Student Wellness

We know this time in our lives is challenging for all, including our students. Mental health experts say during this time of heightened anxiety, finding ways to cope and create stability are key to maintaining a healthy outlook. Children benefit from structure and routines around studying and homework, and it is also important to make sure they have time for play and to be creative in some way. The faculty and I have tried to do this during the day with scheduled live classes. With that, below are a few tips to consider in helping your child(ren) stay on track during this challenging time:

- **Keep Structure in Their Days:** Set a schedule for the weekdays and weekends. Children and teens do their best if there are plans for each day, especially the weekdays when they would have been in school.
- **Set Regular Bedtimes and Wake-Ups:** It is best to have a regular wake-up time and bedtime that is the same as the schedule you set when they are attending school, since it can be hard to get back on track, especially if children get into a late-to-bed, late-to-rise schedule. Remember, teachers are the most available for students from 7:50AM to noon. While the teachers do have office hours in the afternoons, this time is meant for answering parent concerns and planning for the days and weeks ahead.
- **Establish a School Day Educational Schedule:** Consider starting the day with a morning meeting, after students watch Morning Prayer, since this is what most teachers do to start the day. Run through the list of the subjects and lessons for the day with your children. Students are encouraged to use the Google calendar feature to help with this task. Be sure they take breaks, where needed, and eat a nutritious lunch.
- **Stay Connected To Classmates:** Even when isolated at home, parents can help our students stay connected to their classmates with modern technology, within reasonable limits. Encourage online playdates and meet-ups so your child(ren) feel they are still seeing their classmates and enjoying a social connection.
- **Exercise & Leisure Time:** It goes without saying that children need exercise through play. We are lucky that spring is upon us and our children can enjoy the outdoors and the sun. Encourage them to



play outside when the weather permits and consider family playtime as well. Also, as we do in the classroom, students are encouraged to stand when completing their work.

Below are additional resources you might find useful:

- CDC: [Talking with Children About Coronavirus Disease 2019](#)
- National Association of School Psychologists: [Talking to Children About COVID-19 \(Coronavirus\): A Parent Resource](#)
- National Public Radio: [Just For Kids: A Comic Exploring the New Coronavirus](#)
- The New York Times: [Talking to Tweens and Teens About Coronavirus](#) (subscription required)

Wednesday, April 22 marks two important celebrations - Administrative Professionals Day and Earth Day! Please join me in thanking Mrs. Crane for her leadership in the School Office and for the many, many projects and tasks that she spearheads for the school, especially during this time. In addition, I am thankful for Mrs. Russoniello, who manages our reception desk and welcomes our school visitors. Without Mrs. Crane and Mrs. Russoniello, we would be at a deficit and I am forever grateful for all that they do for St. Patrick School.

If we were in school on April 22, our students would participate in hands-on STEM activities to mark Earth Day and hopefully have the opportunity to enjoy doing some of these lessons outside on the school campus. I know several of the faculty have Earth Day lessons planned for Wednesday, but I also encourage you to share the importance of appreciating our planet with your children. Things such as taking a nature walk or constructing nature creations out of leaves, sticks, and rocks can be fun and educational, as is creating a “reduce, reuse, recycle collage” using “trash” such as paper scraps, labels, junk mail, and other found items. There are many individual or collective activities in which your family can engage in that have a positive impact on the environment. It's important to keep in mind that every small act makes a world of difference to appreciate one of God's greatest blessings to us - our planet.

I look forward to seeing the students during the livestream of Morning Prayer on Monday and pray that you and your family stay safe and well.

Look for additional updates in next Sunday's letter.

Blessings,

Christine Ross, Ed. D
Principal