



October 4, 2020

Dear Parents,

We have safely and successfully completed Week 4 and I am very proud of all of the efforts and sacrifices that have been made to get us this far. I thank all of you for journeying with us in dealing with a situation whose direction is unknown. It is still difficult to comprehend all that is going on internally and externally but we must keep to the fore the importance of striving to provide our children with a positive childhood experience during this historic time in our lives. We march on in faith and with confidence that God will give us what we need to keep us healthy. As I write, the numbers in New Jersey are creeping upwards and there is also an uptick in cases locally. We need to continue to be vigilant with the mask wearing, the social distancing and the handwashing.

At our Pandemic Task Force meeting this past week, we examined how we are bringing life to our plan. All members were in concurrence that given the circumstances that all was going well. Having the children back among their peers is a huge source of joy and positivity for us. Their high energy is contagious when they are in the building and I am loving doing lunch duty now more than ever. The task force has decided that it is wise to be prudent at this time of rising numbers. We will maintain our current practice of Blue/Gold hybrid days and proceed with caution. It behooves us to put safety ahead of a full return at this current time. Daily we examine our PPE supplies, our space and our protocols. Daily we attend webinars and collaborate with other schools. Daily we examine what is best for the SVMS population at this time. When you consider how we came in on September 8th, it is clear that we did not begin with Phase 1. We began with full days having the children come into the building for five out of ten school days. Most schools came in with a half day, four days a week with the fifth day taken as a remote/cleaning

day. The SVMS teachers and the children have done a phenomenal job and while it is not the ideal situation, it is the safest for now. We will continue to examine our options during this month and keep you informed.

We have begun expanding our curriculum with the phasing in of Life Lessons with Mrs. Quinn and this will prove to be a valuable source of positivity as the children grapple with the emotions that come from being in this CoVid-19 experience. Already she has made great inroads with them and has balanced connecting with the children at school and at home. Our new gym teacher, Mrs. Dean started on Friday and will focus on health lessons for the first few weeks. During her first day she made a great connection with the children and will help them to develop ways to stay healthy. She is setting up her Google Classrooms so that she will be able to connect with the children at home during this coming week. These two women join a stellar faculty that is willing to go above and beyond the call of duty to establish a curriculum that teaches much more than be found in books. I am so proud of our teachers and feel privileged to work with such dedicated educators.

Mr. Randal and Mr. Tom have done a fantastic job with the cleaning and disinfecting of the building and we are blessed to have them both. Their work is complimented by the Dublin Cleaning Company that comes each evening. Nurse Reilly continues to collaborate with the local health department and receive guidance from them. We are very grateful that so many of you keep your children home when they exhibit any symptoms. I know that this is a challenge given that is high allergy and cold season but we need to continue to be aware that the health of one child impacts the health of many. Please develop the habit of submitting the daily health screening form by 7:45AM. This form is of utmost importance and we need to have full compliance with this requirement. We need to have Nurse Reilly taking temperatures in the morning and not running after families that have forgotten to submit the health screening form.

The car lines at drop off and pick up are going well for the most part and the reduction in the time that it takes has really enabled the children to be in school for longer during the day. Just a reminder that when your child has disembarked from your car that you turn your blinkers on. Please remember that it takes a while for the little ones to get out and in so be patient while you wait. Do not edge forward until signaled as children are walking along the side of the cars. The first car in the line must wait to be waved on. We have two active walking paths just beyond the front to the car line and certainly do not want to observe any accidents in this area. Remember that the walking line is for walkers only and is not in place for anyone wanting to avoid the car line.

We continue to monitor our technological situation. We have examined the devices available to teachers and we are updating some teacher computers. The Technology Committee is collaborating with High Point Solutions to examine our wi-fi with particular

focus on access points in the old building with regards to bandwidth and functionality with the devices that we have. We are hoping that these two initiatives will help iron out all of the glitches that teachers have been experiencing.

The NWEA MAP Growth Test in Grades 2 through 8 went well despite it being our first foray into this type of standardized testing. The teachers collaborated beautifully with schedules as we did not want to overload our system with everyone being online at the same time. The children worked diligently and did their best. That is all that we ask. The data will guide the teachers on curriculum and identify children in need of support and in need of enrichment. The test will be taken again in January and May with the hope that statistics will show growth over time in Math and Reading. Part of our professional day next Friday will be focusing on reading these results and maximizing them to enhance our curriculum.

The virtual "Parenting through a Pandemic" workshop was very enlightening on Tuesday evening. I thank Jen Nolan for securing a wonderful presenter in Kirk Martin whose website celebratecalm.com has excellent pragmatic podcasts. The workshop was well attended and hopefully it will be the first of many.

A big shout out to our little PreK children who are lapping it up by learning prayers, singing songs and being so happy among their peers. They seem to be oblivious that we are in the midst of a pandemic and they take the mask wearing in their stride. One of the great bonuses of my job is that I get to see the children in action every day and if the walls of the building could speak they would proclaim that the SVMS children are the best!

Our annual school picture time is coming soon. It will be a photo taking experience with a difference. On October 13th the Gold group will have their individual pictures taken and on October 14th the Blue group will step in front of the cameras. The children who are fully remote will also have the opportunity to have their pictures taken and will be scheduled. Instead of a group picture this year, the photographer will produce a composite group shot like the ones that can be found in our year books. Stay tuned for more detailed information next week.

As we move in to a shortened Week 5 and Week 6 let us continue to monitor our activities so as to protect ourselves for the good of the whole. Keep your children home if sick and inform Mrs. Reilly of absences so that she can give you advice and guide on what to do if they are sick. We are SVMS Strong and we will stay strong if we keep the faith and work together to keep us all safe and sound.

Blessings,

Sr. Noreen