



“It seems impossible until it’s done.”

Nelson Mandela

November 18, 2020

Dear St. Matthias School Community,

When I walked into the building as Principal in July, I imagined it to be an insurmountable task to open this building safely. However, here we are almost four months into this school year and we have opened up successfully, but more importantly, safely. Now the impossible seems to be if we can keep school open without any cases in our building. The news is grim as we listen to the government and media discussing COVID and the spike in New Jersey as well as the rest of the country. We continue to be vigilant in school with our cleaning and disinfecting routines, not allowing visitors into the building, continuing to offer random testing to students and faculty, just to name a few items of what we are doing to keep all our students, staff, and faculty safe.

I am so impressed with the conscientiousness of our families! Families have been proactive in quarantining students who may have come in contact with an infected person. I thank everyone for their vigilance as we enter a phase of this pandemic that will certainly test us even further with cases on the rise. It seems almost impossible that we will make it through this school year without having a case of COVID affect someone in our school family. It is up to us to continue to be vigilant and hyper-aware of various scenarios, so that our school community remains safe and healthy.

This uptick and the pending holiday are two of the reasons we are closing from Thanksgiving Day and not returning to in-person learning until December 9. All students will be learning virtually. I have enclosed a schedule of what each virtual day will look like. Last week I also sent out a letter about any student requiring Chromebooks. The last day we will accept a request for a Chromebook is tomorrow, **November 19, 2020**. Preparing to send these expensive items home is a Herculean task, and just cannot be completed last minute.

During this time of COVID we are acutely aware that students need to be able to move about and get some fresh air. With this in mind, windows remain open all day in the classrooms. If a student gets cold easily, be sure they have a St. Matthias sweater or fleece to wear inside. Also, we are doing everything we can to be sure students get outside daily for gym and/or recess. If there is no precipitation and the temperature is 32 degrees or greater, students will be outside. Please be sure students have winter coats, hats, gloves, etc. with them daily, so they can be comfortable when outside.

On Monday, we conducted a notification drill to ensure our communications systems (in the case of an actual emergency) were working and parents were registered. You were sent a Google survey to complete to confirm you are getting the information you need. Please be sure that you complete the survey by end of business today.

One final note, I am in the process of researching programs that allow parents to complete the daily questions and temperature checks that we need to do each and every morning. We are discovering that the colder the weather gets, the less workable the thermometers are outdoors. It is my hope that we can put this system in place by December 9<sup>th</sup> (our return date to in-person learning), and use it until the weather warms up. At that time we could return to the process we are using currently. Please stay tuned for possible changes in drop off procedures.

Thank you for your support and your commitment to St. Matthias School.

In His Peace,

Elena Malinconico  
Principal, St. Matthias School