

St. Germaine Family Newsletter

October, 2020

The Adventure Continues

IMPORTANT Professional Development Calendar Changes

The Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) has revised the state school calendar expectations for 2020-2021. The change allows schools to take an additional five days for professional development or to prepare for remote learning opportunities.

In order to accommodate the ISBE changes, we will need to revise the tentative St. Germaine School calendar that you received at the beginning of the school year. To minimize the changes for parents we will build the additional "down time" into already existing staff development times or in proximity to other school holidays.

11/13 No student attendance

On the original calendar, the day was designated as a Half-Day Faculty meeting with student being dismissed at 11:30. The new plan would provide the entire day for staff development, with no student attendance.

11/23-11/24 No student attendance

We will need to revise the plan for Parent Conferences to allow for virtual conferences as needed. For that reason, we will use 11/23 for Parent Teacher Conferences and use Tuesday as a PD day. The remainder of the week was already marked as "no attendance due to the Thanksgiving holiday."

1/15—No student attendance

We did not schedule a Half-Day Faculty Meeting during the month of January. We will add a Professional Development day on 1/15. Students/Families will be able to enjoy a four day weekend for the Martin Luther King, Jr. holiday. Teachers will meet on Friday 1/15.

2/12—No student attendance

On the original calendar, the day was designated as a Half-Day Faculty meeting with student being dismissed at 11:30. The new plan would provide the entire day for staff development, with no student attendance.

3/18-3/19—Parent Teacher Conference Changes

The second optional Parent Teacher Conferences were originally scheduled for 3/19. We will move the conferences (possibly virtual) to 3/18. Students will still be in class until 11:30a.m. We will use 3/19 as a professional development day with no student attendance on that day.

5/21—No student attendance

Uniforms

We will continue to wear gym uniforms rather than regular uniforms for the foreseeable future. Please be alert to weather conditions and have your child dress appropriately. They may either wear gym short/t-shirts or sweatpants/sweatshirts as appropriate.

No one can claim that we've had a "normal" beginning to a "normal" school year, but I think things are settling into a rhythm! Our "remote learners" are getting accustomed to the technology they need to be successful and keep up with those of us who are in school. Our "in-person" kids are cooperating with all of the protocols for masks and social distancing (although almost everyone has a hard time judging 3 foot and 6 foot distances!) Teachers have made adaptations to their teaching strategies and even how they arrange the classroom furniture to promote distancing.

We thank everyone for the cooperation and support you've shown. Arrival procedures, with temperature checks and hand sanitizing, have gone very smoothly. The traffic flow is simple and moves quickly. We owe a great debt of gratitude to all those who have helped with the procedures. Volunteers are helping in the temperature lines, directing traffic, and supervising the younger students as they find their places in the gym. We couldn't do it without them. We also have a great group of volunteers who are helping in the lunchroom. The four lunch periods (as contrasted with two "pre-COVID") are actually quieter. The volunteers help us to disinfect tables and chairs between each group of students.

All in all, I think we've made a great start to the 2020-2021 school year—even under the challenging circumstances.

Guidance Regarding Student Illness and Absence

It's been a challenge navigating the directions concerning student illness/absence. We are following the guidance we receive from the Office of Catholic Schools and are communicating with them when we have concerns.

Here is the latest guidance we have received from the Office of Catholic Schools:

- 1 A doctor's note is required for individuals who develop COVID-19-like symptoms but are diagnosed by a doctor or health care provider as having another illness. The individual must have a note from the provider indicating a specific alternate diagnosis if the individual wants to return prior to a complete 10 day isolation. If the individual chooses not to get an alternate diagnosis confirmed in writing then the individual must meet the criteria for returning as a COVID-19 positive case
- 2 A doctor's note is not required for individuals who are:
 - a. COVID-19 positive. For the individual to return to school he or she must have remained home for 10 days, no fever for 24 hours (without medication), and a general reduction of other symptoms by 75% or more
 - b. Sent home because of a single COVID-19 like symptom, but whose symptom dissipates within 24 hours. These individuals may return to school if symptoms have dissipated and they have not been exposed to any sick individual. If symptoms have not dissipated with 24 hours. See #1 above
 - c. Quarantined, but not symptomatic, due to a COVID exposure. Individuals may return to school if they have been quarantined for 14 days and not developed symptoms of Covid-19 during that time.

We ask you to be especially vigilant about NOT SENDING YOUR CHILD TO SCHOOL if they present any of the numerous COVID symptoms.

Office of Catholic Schools eSchool 2.0

The Office of Catholic Schools is providing us with resources to use with students who are learning remotely from home. The materials for each grade include lessons and assignments for each subject for each day of the week. New lessons are posted each week. This resource will also be useful for students who might be under quarantine or simply at home due to a non-COVID illness for a day or two. Teachers are placing a link to the resource on their Google Classroom or TEAM sites so that you can access it.

Welcome Back, Mrs. Kurey

Mrs. Kurey will be released to come back to school on October 5th. Recovery from her knee injury has been a slow process. She will still need some accommodations in her classroom. We're thrilled to have her back with us.

Halloween Activities

We are working to develop plans for some safe Halloween activities at school this year.

Classroom parties, like those we have had in the past, will probably not be possible this year. Teachers may plan some activities in their classrooms, but will not invite parents in to work on parties.

We are hoping to hold a TRUNK or TREAT event in the school parking lot on **Friday, Oct. 30**.

As we finalize details, we will ask parents to register if they would like to provide a treat for students on that day. We will assign parking slots in the lot to preserve social distancing. We cannot distribute home-made treats. All treats will need to be packaged in manufacturer's packaging for individual use.

Each class will come to the parking lot with their teacher to participate. We will most likely begin at about 1:30 so parents planning to distribute treats will need to be in the parking lot before that time.

Look for more information as the Family School Association and the teacher work out the details.

Holiday Shopping is Just Around the Corner! We're here to Help

Remember you can help the school financially by using several programs that are generating funds for us:

Smile.amazon.com
The Germazing Mighty Ducks
The Manna Program

We appreciate any way you can help out. For information about any of the Programs, please give us a call.

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Looking Ahead. . .

- 10/2 First Trimester Progress reports will be distributed to students.
- 10/5 Mrs. Kurey will be back with the eighth grade!!
- 10/9 Profession Development Day for Teachers—no student attendance (This day was on the original school calendar)
- 10/12 Columbus Day Holiday—no student attendance
- 10/30 Halloween TRUNK or TREAT event. Details to follow. Start to plan now if you would like to join the fun! (See the outline of the event above)

Please be sure to note the changes in the Professional Development calendar that are listed on the front page! We will send out a revised summary calendar sheet shortly.

BARK Alerts for School Issued Accounts

Last year, in an attempt to help us monitor student use of school email accounts, we enrolled in a third party site that helps us to identify inappropriate or dangerous communications.

The site alerts the school (and parents if they have established "free" accounts) of content sent by students deemed "cyberbullying," "violence," "inappropriate language," or "self-harm."

Recently, we have had several alerts on comments posted by our students. The alerts help us to identify the student who originated the content and any students with whom the content was shared. The recent content was disconcerting because it involved inappropriate language and cyberbullying.

When we talked with students we made the strong point that if anyone received an inappropriate message, they should inform the office—especially if they were not involved in authoring the message.

We also warned all of the students that actively participating in such messages would result in their technology privileges being revoked and their school chromebook being returned to the school. We will send copies of message alerts that prove to be inappropriate to you.

Please help us to reinforce this message, especially among the older students.

Contacting Teachers after School Hours

Communication between parents/students and teachers is an important part of the learning process. We have set up teacher email accounts so that they are easy to remember for both parents and students. We ask, though, that you be sensible about contacting teachers or staff members outside of school time. While contacts until about 7 o'clock are probably alright, anything later than that should probably wait until the next day. We all know how we react when the phone or computer "bings" with a notification late in the evening.

Haircuts

We know that many of us got quite used to the barber shops being closed. However, now that they are back in operation, we need to remind you of the Family Handbook regulation about hair length:

Students are expected to be clean and well-groomed at all times, both in and out of uniform. Dress and/or grooming which are not in accord with reasonable standards of health, safety and decency will be considered inappropriate. Hair must be clean and of moderate length. Boys may not wear their hair "over their ears," nor below their shirt collars. Parents of students deemed by the teacher and principal to be dressed inappropriately may be called so that the student may return home to change clothing.

Please make an appointment if a haircut is necessary to be in compliance

2019-2020 Yearbooks

We have a number of yearbooks from last year available for purchase. Cost is \$25 per book. Don't you want a memento of the COVID YEAR? Some day it will be a collector's item! Call the office if you are interested.

