



Saint Mary School

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August 2017

Dear St. Mary School Families,

The summer - a time for reflection and a season for relaxation...

As we are now in the month of August, it is my hope that this communication finds you enjoying the long, golden days and starlit nights of a month that will pass all too quickly! As someone once said, two of the most beautiful words in the English language are “summer afternoons” - what vibrant, hopeful connotations they evoke in all of us. The summer is, indeed, a time to reflect, relax and to enjoy the moments that will frame our lifetime memories.

I hope that your children are enjoying their time away from school but I must admit - it is also my hope that by now, they are starting to think about the start of school and being back with their friends and teachers! I can tell you that we are working hard at the school, preparing for their arrival and for another outstanding, exciting school year at SMS.

I would like to welcome all of our new families who are entering into St. Mary School. As this is my third year at the school, I can comfortably declare that you are joining a very special place, with an incredible faculty, wonderfully supportive families and a community who proudly practices and lives by the Catholic faith. Thank you for joining us and welcome to the SMS Family.

With the start of school on our radar, please review the following updates. As well, please note that another communication will be sent directly home later this month.

Faculty Update

Mrs. Terri Albuquerque, Fifth Grade Teacher, will not be returning to St. Mary School for the upcoming school year. Mrs. Albuquerque was an excellent member of our faculty and her dedication to SMS will always be appreciated. She will remain a friend of our community and we wish her all the best with her future endeavors.

“Saint Mary School is a Christ-centered educational community dedicated to fostering Catholic faith and Gospel values, while striving for academic excellence within a nurturing family atmosphere.”

Mr. Michael Jodon, Middle School Math, will not be returning to St. Mary School for the upcoming school year. Mr. Jodon did great work in our math department last year and his commitment to our students was appreciated by all. We wish Mr. Jodon the very best with all of his future endeavors.

After an exhaustive search of highly-qualified candidates, I am thrilled to announce that these faculty positions are now filled. We cannot make any official announcements until the paperwork process is completed by the Diocese of Bridgeport. However, please know that we are very excited about our new additions and feel that they are the perfect fit for St. Mary School. In fact, they were our first choices among many various candidates!

Pre-K Expansion/8th Grade Lockers

Last year, we expanded our Pre-K program by adding in two new class sections. This year, we planned to add another new Pre-K section, which would have totaled four sections. We have decided not to open up that fourth section, so our Pre-K program will consist of three classes, as it did last year (two Pre-K 4 & one Pre-K 3).

We will not have 8th Grade lockers installed in the main hallway (as was discussed in the spring). Instead, the 8th Grade will use the Science Lab as their Homeroom and the 6th Grade will use Mrs. Ben-Ami's room as their Homeroom.

Please note: Classes will continue to travel to the convent for Computer class with Mr. Houser. In poor weather conditions, computer class will take place in the main building.

Middle School Math & ELA Summer Review Sessions

All middle school (6th-8th) students are invited to summer review sessions that we will be held in late August. We understand not all will be able to attend, and please know there is no disadvantage to "not attending"... these will be review sessions and an introduction to the upcoming year, while also presenting a chance to meet the new math teacher. If you cannot make it, it is certainly understandable.

- Tuesday, August 22 - ELA Review
 - Entering 6th Grade - 9:00-10:00AM
 - Entering 7th Grade - 10:15-11:15AM
 - Entering 8th Grade - 11:30-12:30PM

- Wednesday, August 23 - MATH Review
 - Entering 6th Grade - 9:00-10:00AM
 - Entering 7th Grade - 10:15-11:15AM
 - Entering 8th Grade - 11:30-12:30PM

To register for these classes, please email Mrs. Decker at mdecker@stmarybethelct.org and indicate which sessions your child will attend.

HSA Fee Increase

As stated during spring communications, our HSA Fee will increase for the upcoming school year from \$100 to \$200 for current families.

This increase remains part of a multi-year plan to slowly reduce both our dependence on fundraising events, as well as the intense stress and pressure that our parents annually endure to successfully run each event. We must begin to shift to a model that other schools use around the nation, with an increased HSA Fee and less critical and crucial fundraising events. We want to keep the fun and tradition of our events while gradually removing the financial emphasis. This will take time and we are already making great progress.

Arrival & Dismissal

We will continue to hold Morning Assembly daily in the gym for Grades K-8. Homerooms will be expected in the Gym by 7:40AM. We will have prayer, pledge and announcements together as one body. Please note: Your child's arrival to school prior to the Morning Assembly is integral to a smooth and calm start to their day.

Please see the Dismissal chart below:

| | |
|---------|---|
| 1:59 PM | All Homerooms K-8 expected in the Gym |
| 1:59PM | Students go to appropriate BUS, PICKUP or CLUB section of Gym |
| 2:00PM | Bus students begin to board their buses |
| 2:00PM | Pre-K Dismisses (in PK wing) |
| 2:10PM | Doors/Gym Open for Family Pick Up |

- * Once all Bus students board, we can then let families into the building for K-8 Pick Up.
- * Older siblings will be sent to their younger Pre-K sibling for Pick Up in their respective Pre-K Pick Up location.

Please know that we cannot allow families into the Gym to wait for dismissal. This is a safety and security issue - we cannot overload the Gym. Please wait for all Bus students to exit the building and for the front doors to open. Then, you may enter the building and into the gym for your child(ren).

After-School Care (“Club”)

Our “Club” program will continue to be split into two independent sections:

- One section will be for Pre-Kindergarten
- One section will be for K-8

After School Activities

We are developing our after school activity offerings for the Fall of 2017 and will announce the options as soon as possible. Once again, we will offer these activities in two sessions. The first session will begin in October and end in January. The second session will begin in February and end in May. As always, we will have creative and exciting enrichment activities for your children!

Chromebook Program

We are happy to report that plans are being executed regarding our Chromebook program. Currently, we are looking to have Chromebooks for each middle school student to use at the school (all work accessible at home via the cloud using a computer, laptop or device). Our hope is to bring the program to some of the lower grades, as well.

The diocese will upgrade our WiFi capabilities, which will take place later this month. Concurrently, we will begin to purchase the Chromebooks as our fundraising efforts begin to settle.

We are really excited about this new program and all of the capabilities and options it will give our school. However, this is brand-new for us and we ask for your patience as we unveil this new feature. In the end, the beneficiaries will be our teachers and of course, our students.

New SIS - Rediker

Please note that we are using a new student information system and there could be a few issues that need to be ironed out as we move forward. Regardless, the new system is called Rediker and our teachers will be trained in late August.

This new system will be able to host Class Sites as well. Until we have that up and running, I am asking teachers and families to remain in contact and to keep communication open. Some teachers may still choose to use our old class site host, School Rack, until the full switch-over is made. Please be patient as we upgrade and improve our Class Sites.

Please note: Parents will be sent their access code for Rediker during the month of August.

Uniforms

Last year, there were some instances where students attended school in colorful socks and/or colorful “shoes” that became a distraction and go against school policy. Please note, students must wear dark dress socks along with blue, black or brown dress shoes to school. As well, hoodies and various other sweatshirts are not permitted during school. Please refer to our school handbook for further clarification. As we are a Catholic school, our personal appearance is a very important element of our culture.

New Family Pizza Night & Pre-K Popsicle Party

On Monday, August 28, we will have a pizza party for all of our new families. This will start at 6PM at the school. On Thursday, August 31, we will have a Pre-K popsicle party for all Pre-K families. This will start at 6PM and will be at the school as well.

Two September “Save the Dates”

On Tuesday, September 12, we will host a presentation for parents that will focus on some important issues faced today, such as safety on the internet, conflict resolution and other issues our students and families might be dealing with. The Women’s Center of Danbury will be the presenters and the evening will begin at 6:30PM and end by 8PM. More information to come.

On Tuesday, September 19, we will have our annual “Meet the Teacher” night at our school. This event will begin at 7PM and we highly encourage all parents to attend.

May God continue to bless our school community.

Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance. Let perseverance finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything. - James 1:2-4

Gratefully,
Greg Viceroy
Principal