

Dear Families,

Forgive the length of this email. There are a number of items that I have to share, all of them designed to help support you during this very important time. There are 3 very important items I have to share.

1. Parent meetings: Please remember that there will be Google Meets set for grade bands of students, starting August 7 and running through August 14. You will receive an email with an invitation, This is an opportunity to ask any questions you have as we prepare to start the year. These meetings are optional and are being offered to support you during this time. Teachers may also be participating in this meeting ,as well.
2. I am sharing the following article from Carol Morrone MSW who works with Mobile Therapy Centers. It addresses the return to school and emotions you and your child(ren) may be feeling right now.

Returning to School During a Pandemic

As we prepare our children for a new school year in 2020, we are all facing unprecedented challenges that continue to impact our daily lives due to the Covid-19 pandemic. Some of our children may be returning to in-person learning, some may be continuing with remote lessons, and many will most likely be experiencing a hybrid version of both in-person and online lessons. Parents have an important responsibility in helping to prepare their children for this new school year, while keeping them safe and alleviating fears of the new normal related to education.

In the spring, schools were mandated to shut down as the virus spread and fear increased. Since then, we have learned more about Covid-19 and how to keep our families safe. Businesses have begun to re-open while everyone continues to adjust to the new normal. As we make plans for the upcoming school year, let us keep this progress in mind as we prepare our children. While we still don't know how long restrictions will last, or if we may even experience a rollback on reopening due to a new surge of Covid-19, we know much more now than we did 6 months ago when the first case was reported in the United States. Let us focus on the positive, and the steps we can take to keep our children safe and to alleviate their fears as we approach the new school year.

One of the first steps you can take as a parent is to contact your child's school to learn what plans are being implemented for both learning and for safety. Talk with your child about how returning to school this year will be both the same in some ways and different in others. Acknowledge your child's fears as they arise, and their disappointments. Social activities and even personal interactions with peers will definitely be limited. For children, school is a central core to their lives, and any change can be scary. Continue to reassure your child that these changes are necessary for their safety, while also encouraging their input into

creative ways to face these challenges. You want your child to be appropriately cautious while avoiding fear. As masks continue to be a necessary requirement, engage your child in picking out special masks for back to school. Masks have become a notable fashion accessory and can be just as exciting as picking out new clothes. By engaging your child in this process, you are helping them become compliant with the requirement. If you have become more relaxed with precautions such as disinfecting surfaces and handwashing at home, now is the time to renew your vigilance and set the example for your children.

Of equal importance is for parents to help their child focus on what is still the same this school year. Parents need to start getting their children on a regular schedule. Often summertime means more fluid bedtimes and relaxed rules. As we get our children prepared to return to a school environment, we need to start adding back more structure. If you have allowed later bedtimes, start gradually working back to an earlier schedule. Even 5 minutes earlier each day will make the transition easier than if you wait until the end of summer. If your child is a late morning sleeper, move wake up times earlier in increments as well. Whether school will be in-person or remote, or both, be sure each child has a designated spot for homework and supplies. Talk about schedules. Be sure to incorporate relaxation and family time into remote learning and working. As an increasing number of our homes are also our office and school, we need to remember that first and foremost we are family, and our homes need to reflect that safe haven for our children.

Finally, adults need to keep talking with children, answering their questions simply. Use age-appropriate words and explanations. As adults, we more fully understand the nuances and impact the Covid-19 pandemic continues to have on our lives, but there is no need for us to overly burden our children. The primary job of a parent is to keep your child safe, which includes knowing what information to share. Reach out to other parents for support and ideas. Your children will grow and move on from this crisis and are often much more resilient than adults. Let us keep positive and informed and remember to also take time to relax as a family, and to be an advocate for your child. There is no more important job than the job of a parent.

To help all SCS parents, regardless of whether or not they are selecting face-to-face learning or a long-term e-learning option, St. Celestine School has scheduled a virtual parent event with Carol Morrone on August 18 at 6:30pm. An invitation link will be shared with you prior to the event. This event is optional, as well. The staff and I want to support all of our families with as many resources as we can.

3. Lastly, there has been quite a bit of interest in the long-term e-learning option originally mentioned as being provided through the Archdiocese of Chicago. If your family is interested in this option, please complete this survey by Monday, August 10, so that planning can be completed.

<https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLScJiaLTYOfrrXdWYLRWWrZJYWZfK8rWANK7UBWycdPENyRfrQ/viewform>

Quite a number of families expressed reservations about a third party, who is not directly involved with our students offering the instruction. With that in mind, the following model for the 2020/2021 has been designed using SCS teachers and will be implemented starting this Fall.

St. Celestine School
2020/21 Two Track Model for the Return to School

The SCS Two Track Plan allows for closer implementation of SCS curriculum, greater coordination efforts within the community, the inclusion of teachers from SCS, and improved flexibility should the school need to shift from one track to another. We are working within our community and supporting each other in this model.

Face to Face Track:

- A physical return to St. Celestine School following the cohort model developed by the Archdiocese of Chicago.
- Begins August 20 (Last names A-L) or August 21 (Last names M-Z).
- An ability to move to short term e-learning, coordinated by the Homeroom Teacher, should the child need to be away from the classroom for any reason.
- Adherence to the Archdiocesan Priority Standards during instruction.

Long Term e-learning track:

- Available for PreK-8
- Organized using St. Celestine School teachers and staff according to grade-bands, with consultation by the Homeroom Teachers to ensure coordinated instruction between tracks.
 - Grade Band: PreK- First Grade
 - Grade Band: Second Grade to Fourth Grade
 - Grade Band: Fifth Grade to Eighth Grade
- This track will begin Monday, August 31. This will allow teachers and staff the opportunity to plan and prepare lessons aligned for both Face-to-Face Instruction and Long Term e-learning.

- **Coordination of e-learning lessons with those lessons being taught in the Face-to-Face Track. The concept and content being taught will be the same. There may be differences in how the lesson will be taught, given the differences in the two types of instruction.**
- **Face-to-Face lessons will not be live-streamed.**
- **Adherence to the Archdiocesan Priority Standards during instruction.**
- **Core classes taught: Religion, Reading, English, Math, Science, and Social Studies.**
- **The use of Google Meets, videos, iReady, and platforms designed to coordinate instruction and share communication around instruction.**
- **Parent and student support will be provided by St. Celestine Staff.**
- **Chromebook loaner devices will be available through the school on a first-come-first-serve basis.**
- **The ability to return seamlessly to face-to-face instruction at the end of the first trimester will be provided.**

Thank you for your commitment to St. Celestine School as we plan for the Fall. Please reach out to me at sklich@stcelestineschool.org if you have any additional questions. You are in my prayers and the prayers of the staff.

Sincerely,

Sheila M. Klich
Principal