April 27, 2020

Dear Families,

I hope that this note finds you well, healthy, and safe. While I am anticipating further guidance from Governor Cuomo later this week about the remainder of the academic year for schools statewide, my assumption in planning from now through graduation is that we will in all likelihood not be able to return to our buildings. With that in mind I write to tell you about modifications we are making to our distance learning schedule for Kindergarten through High School beginning next week.

We are modifying three days in May and June while continuing to offer younger students ways to engage with school each weekday. In grades K-12, we will not hold regular classes on Thursday May 7, Wednesday May 13 and Tuesday June 2. For students in grades K-3, we will provide optional synchronous workshops and activities (offered by our afterschool teachers and others) on each of those days from 9am-3pm (with an hour’s break for lunch). For students in grades 4 and 5, optional programming will be provided from 9am-12pm on each of those days. Preschool students will continue with their normal schedule but will be welcome to join the workshops whenever they are not having synchronous gatherings. A more detailed schedule of workshops and activities for individual grades will follow.

In the upper middle and high schools, division heads and I have heard and observed rising concerns from many parents and students about student stress levels. These modifications are designed to give our older students in grades 6-12 more flexible, off-screen time to work independently or to take a much-needed break. The days will also provide opportunities for alternative programming as we approach that time of the year when many students would ordinarily be presenting their work in festivals, symposia, research presentations and other culminating events. While only some of these events will translate into our virtual experience, many departments and teachers have ideas for how we can ensure that we don't lose this critical aspect of what it means to be at Saint Ann’s in May and June. These days will also provide time for teachers to write reports, plan lessons, respond to student work, and so on.

The rest of our academic calendar through our last day of school remains the same (and with input we will gather from our seniors in a survey this week we are working on contingency plans for our graduation ceremony on June 9th). We continue to encourage faculty in the middle and high schools to be mindful of the additional screen time that homework assignments may require. The health and wellbeing of our entire community continue to be my primary focus, as well as doing all that I can to infuse these remaining weeks of learning at Saint Ann’s with the joyfulness and camaraderie that have long been our hallmarks as a school.

Love,

Vince