



Update from the Middle School Division Head

April 7, 2020

Good Evening, Middle School Families,

First, I want to acknowledge all the hard work and energy that our MS teachers are investing in planning lessons and assignments, learning new teaching strategies and digital tools, and connecting with their advisory, classes, and parents in order to provide their students and advisees all the learning and support that will bring success despite all the challenges COVID-19 has presented. They are demonstrating persistence, resilience, and creativity in all that they do for your child(ren), their colleagues, and St. Anne's.

For students, teachers, and parents, we have just entered week 3 of our distance learning program. Thus far, we have all had to employ skills that were automatic and practiced; become more proficient with skills that may have been less familiar and foreign to us; and to learn and embrace new skills that were unrealized and unknown, maybe even scary, to us. Is it easy? No. Will it get better? Yes. Will we emerge stronger with new skills and competencies? Absolutely. For now, if you are looking for other resources and helpful websites as you and your family navigate the ever-changing situation, here are a few to help:

- Ms. Pali Payne, LCSW, MSSW, SAES School Counselor joined our Saturday 4/4/20 Virtual Coffee. She shared very helpful information and answered many questions. [Here is the link to the video/ discussion](#)
- CDC's page for [Stress and Coping - COVID-19](#)
- ChildMind Institute's web page on [Supporting Families during COVID-19](#)
- FAQ document found on the [St. Anne's COVID-19 page](#) in "Updates" along with other helpful resources

One of the major take-a-ways from Ms. Payne's session on Saturday was her emphasis on the importance of having an established routine and workspace as well as established expectations at home. Yes, I have written about this before; however, as we move through week 3 and approach our first month of distance learning, establishing routines and expectations becomes even more important for creating stability and familiarity - both at home and "at school." Here are some things you can do to help provide your child(ren) with continued support and helpful familiarity:

- Start each day with a [healthy breakfast](#) - children need a full tank to have fuel for learning
- Invite your child to open their email and Google Classroom alongside you in the morning as you check your email and establish your “To Do” list for the day. This modeling will go a long way to helping your child foster good habits, strengthen their [executive function skills](#), and build [intrinsic motivation](#).
- Ensure their workspace is somewhere that can be neat, presentable during video conferencing, and a place you can periodically monitor. A tidied bedroom is fine, a bed is not.
- Child(ren) should get dressed for school. Casual is fine; pajamas are not.
- Eating lunch and having healthy snacks are healthy habits but please, not when video-conferencing.
- [Sleep is key](#) for kids - ideally 9 hours or more. Establish a bedtime and keep it during the school week.
- Ensure that electronic devices are [removed from the bedroom](#) at night so that the child is more likely to get a good night’s sleep. *On a related note, students who love video gaming, enjoy surfing YouTube to learn new things, etc. may find it hard to put their electronics down during the day. A set routine and space for completing lessons and assignments as well as identified “electronic time” will help them make better choices.*

As we know, one routine that has been disrupted by COVID-19 and social distancing is being able to routinely see each other. This challenge got me wondering, “How can we ensure that physical distancing and social distancing do not become synonymous?” Read on for one step that the school is taking as well as other ideas you can use with family and friends.

St. Anne’s is working to make video conferencing with Google Meet open for students, which would allow them to use their school email address for setting up their own Google Meets within the school’s G-Suite. When this feature is enabled for students, it should make it easier for them to interact and collaborate with each other. For student safety as well as organizational integrity, SAES students and families may only connect with other SAES students and families. For other ways to connect with your family and friends, try some of these other ideas:

- Plan a family [Kahoot Party](#) for your extended family
- Coordinate a [Netflix Party](#) for your kids and their friends
- Create an [online photo book](#) - the possibilities are unlimited

We will not have a Virtual Coffee this weekend because of the Easter holiday. Our next MS Virtual Coffee is on Saturday, April 18th from 9:00 - 9:40 am. We will gather with Google Meet (meet.google.com/koo-pkah-mux) and phone number (602-899-2772 PIN 226 914 252#. If you cannot join us, the recording of the meeting will be available on the [COVID-19 updates page](#) on the School’s website.

Your feedback always makes us better! Please know that we value your input and insights about our efforts. In fact, the School is working on a survey to hear about your experiences with SAES Distance Learning. Be looking for that all-school survey. Recently, we surveyed all our MS students about their distance learning experience and our submission rate is about 50%. Be sure to encourage your child to complete the survey; their feedback will inform our

planning and teaching. Our collective cooperation and collaboration will foster student progress and growth as well as propel us through any challenges we face. Stay safe. #WeAreHeronStrong

In partnership,

Jill

P.S. If you enjoyed John Krasinski's first episode of SomeGoodNews - SGN - you'll love [the second episode of SGN](#). If you enjoy seeing happy kids and love *Hamilton*, the musical, this is a must watch!