

# SAINT MARY CATHOLIC SCHOOL

110 ROBINWOOD DR. S.W.  
FT. WALTON BEACH, FLORIDA 32548  
(850) 243-8913 \* FAX (850) 243-7895



*Rev. Doug Halsema, Pastor*  
*Mrs. Amy T. Akins, Principal*

August 3, 2020

Dear Saint Mary Catholic School Families,

We want to welcome all families, both new and old, to the Saint Mary Catholic School Community for the 2020-2021 School Year. We are so happy you have chosen SMCS for your child's education during this challenging time. It is our prayer you will enjoy being an active member of the Saint Mary Catholic School Family and have a wonderful experience this year, both academically and spiritually.

At Saint Mary School we are committed to providing students with spiritual and academic excellence. We firmly believe in the mission and philosophy of Catholic Education, the education and well-being of all students, compassion toward others, and the uniqueness and integrity of each human being.

We know that opening school during this uncertain time can bring concerns. Our philosophy will center on four foundations: monitoring and responding to student and faculty health, limiting and eliminating unnecessary or risky activities, revising cleaning and disinfection protocols, and finally, having an exceptional curriculum to include distance learning structures in place in the event of a planned or unplanned shutdown. I want to thank you for your attention, partnership, and patience over the last few months as we have all navigated the constantly changing realities within our community and our schools. We are dedicated to the exemplary education of your children whom you have entrusted to our care.

Saint Mary Catholic School Back-to-school events will look different this school year.

- There will be a virtual orientation for all parents on **Monday, August 17<sup>th</sup> at 6:00 p.m.** This meeting will provide our new parents and returning parents an opportunity to learn more about Saint Mary Catholic School. Information on how to access will be emailed out.
- Our '**Meet Your Teacher**' for students in **PreK through 1<sup>st</sup> Grade** and any student from **2<sup>nd</sup> – 8<sup>th</sup> that is new to SMCS** will be **Thursday, August 20<sup>th</sup>**, at scheduled times throughout the day. Classroom teacher assignments will be emailed/texted home on August 17<sup>th</sup>.

August 20 Schedule: K3 8:00am - 8:30am  
K4 8:30am - 9:30am  
K5A 9:30am - 10:30am  
K5B 10:30am - 11:30am  
1A 1:00pm - 2:00pm  
1B 2:00 pm - 3:00pm

For 2nd to 8th Grade - only students NEW to SMCS 9:00 - 10:00am



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- Supply Drop-Off for paper and cleaning supplies ONLY will be August 14th from 9am to 11am. This will be to drop off reams of paper, paper towels, hand sanitizer, wipes, and any other paper/cleaning supply that is on your child's classroom list. Parents will drive through the parking lot in front of the Office and we will be there to take your supplies from your car. You will not need to get out of your car.
- Students will bring their personal **school supplies for learning** on the first two days of school in their backpack.
- If your child will ride the bus for the new school year, please call the office to let us know. Our bus routes are to Navarre, Niceville, and Destin. The bus routes and stops are on the website. We are very happy to announce we have hired a new bus driver, Mrs. Jeanne Depue.
- Our Orientation for all K3, K4, and K5 students and their parents will be **virtual** on **Wednesday, August 19<sup>th</sup>. 9am for K4, 9:30am for K3, and 10am for K5.** Information will be sent home on how to access the Virtual Orientation.

The first day of school will be Monday, August 24th. The first and second day of school will have **early dismissal at 11:30.**

## **“Beyond the Bell” Extended Care Program:**

**There is no AfterCare on the first two days of school that have early dismissal, but we will have Before Care.** At this time, our Before and AfterCare are full due to limits to the number of children allowed. We will add more spots as guidance allows/changes.

## **Important Carpool Information**

- Both Arrival and Dismissal will look very different this year. We have staggered arrival and dismissal times. Your child’s teacher will give you specific information on your dismissal time.
- Please realize that everything will take longer this year due to health protocols in place. Students temperatures will be taken upon Arrival.
- All families will be issued a **name tag** and asked to display the name card at dismissal time, either carrying in your hand for our new dismissal in the Gym, or on your dashboard when we move to vehicle dismissal. It is very important to use your name tag to expedite dismissal and help little ones who are not sure about their last name yet. Please use this tag each day throughout the year. This is very important as it will significantly increase the safety and speed of dismissal.



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## Arrival

- **Elementary and Middle School Morning Carpool lines will be up and running the first day of school, from 7:45am to 8:15am.** In the morning, students in grades K3 through 5<sup>th</sup> are to be dropped off in the main parking lot off of Coral Dr. Staff members will help the children get out of the car, take temperatures, and assist students to the correct classroom.
- Parents of K3, K4, and K5 may walk their child to class the first **two weeks of school only**. After that we ask all parents to use the morning carpool line.

## Dismissal

- Dismissal for the first month of school will be **Indoor Dismissal in the Gymnasium, and Middle School in the Middle School parking lot.**
- **Students in Grades K3-4th, and 5th, 6<sup>th</sup>, and 7<sup>th</sup> Grade students with younger siblings will be picked up in the Gymnasium.**
- Specific information on our new dismissal procedures will be shared closer to school starting.
- Middle School Carpool is for **5<sup>th</sup>, 6<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup>, and 8<sup>th</sup> grade students who do not have siblings younger than 5<sup>th</sup> grade.**
- Middle School Carpool is in front of the main Office in the U-shaped driveway, off of Robinwood Dr.
- **Middle School Carpool, both morning and afternoon carpool, will start the first day of school.** Middle School Carpool does not participate in In-Door Dismissal and operates rain or shine.

Communication is very important to us, and two important ways we share information are our **SMCS Message Newsletter, and Flocknote texting.** Please sign up to receive our **SMCS Message** by email by assuring we have a correct email for you on file. You may sign-up for Flocknote texts on the front page of our website. The SMCS Message newsletter is also posted on our website each week and on social media.



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## Faculty Changes

We would like to announce some exciting faculty additions to our SMCS Archangels.

Mrs. Ashlynn James is our new Middle School Science and Math Teacher, and 6th Grade Homeroom teacher. Mrs. James has a Master's Degree in Instructional Technology, and has been teaching middle school science for seven years.

Ms. Angela Lehtimaki is our new 5th Grade Teacher. She has a Master's Degree in Geological Sciences, and previously taught in the Santa Rosa School District. Please join us in welcoming them both to our school family and to their new positions!

## High School Level Courses

We have Middle School courses for high school credit, **Computer Science Discoveries 1 for 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> Grade, Spanish I for 7<sup>th</sup> & 8<sup>th</sup>, and Algebra I**. Seventh and eighth Grade students will choose between Spanish I and Computer Science I for their elective. In order to take Algebra I, students must meet the Diocese Matrix which includes a course grade of A or B in PreAlgebra. Please see our handbook on the website for more information. We are also a Florida Virtual School, and students may take courses online, to include other foreign languages. Please notify your child's homeroom teacher with your child's choice of Computer Science or Spanish I.

## Laptop Program for Middle School

We have a 1-to-1 Computer Device Program in Middle School. All of our middle school students will receive a Dell Laptop. All students and parents must sign the Acceptable Use Policy in order to be assigned a laptop. Students will be using the laptops in the classroom for the first few weeks of school, then the students will be able to take the laptops home.

## Breakfast and Lunch

We have a federal USDA lunch program, and offer delicious, healthy meals. Student lunches are \$3.00, and Breakfast is \$2.00. We will send home information about our lunch program in your welcome packet. You can also contact Mrs. Janice Seilhan with questions. Lunch payments can be made by cash or check, or our online payment method SchoolBucks.

Breakfast is served at 7:40AM for students who do not attend Before Care. Students may arrive at 7:40AM to eat breakfast and not be charged for BeforeCare. FRL students receive free or discounted breakfast as



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well as lunch. Students who do attend BeforeCare may have breakfast while they are in BeforeCare beginning at 7:00am, if parents wish for them to. Please contact Mrs. Seilhan, our Cafeteria Manager, for more information. Reminder: students who pack their lunch will eat lunch in their classroom to limit the number of students in the Cafeteria. Students may choose daily if they wish to purchase a school lunch or pack their own.

## **PowerSchool: Grades Online**

We use an online web-based school gradebook program called PowerSchool, where you can access your child's grades in real-time. If you are a new family, log-in information will be sent to you by Mrs. Neiger during the first two weeks of school. If you are a returning student, please remember to keep your student(s) PowerSchool Username and Password from the 2019-2020 school year. These Usernames and Passwords will be enabled for the 2020-2021 school year in August. This is a very important tool in monitoring your child's progress.

## **Parent Handbook and Return to School Plan**

Our Handbook and **Return to School Plan** can be found on our website. Please review it and sign the handbook acceptance form that will be sent home in your Welcome Packets.

## **OUR PTO**

We would like to say a heart-felt good-bye to our out-going President, Mrs. Karen Kirk. Mrs. Kirk implemented many new programs during her tenure as president, and we are so thankful for her dedication to our students. We want to give a big welcome to our new president, Mrs. Stacey Mai. We are looking forward to the activities of our fabulous PTO this year!

We hope all of you are enjoying the beautiful summer weather and time with family, and we greatly look forward to seeing you soon for the start of the 2020-2021 School Year. We are blessed with a dedicated faculty and staff, and outstanding students and families at Saint Mary Catholic School. If you have any questions, or if I can be of any additional service, please do not hesitate to call the school at 850-243-8913. Together, we will have an outstanding school year!

God Bless,

Amy T. Akins, Ed. S  
Principal



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