



August 13, 2020

Dear Parents:

*“Rejoice in hope, be patient in tribulation, be constant in prayer.” Romans 12:12*

Please accept my warmest welcome to families new and old to St. Monica School 2020-2021 academic year. I am not quite sure when we ended 2019-2020 and began 2020-2021. It has been a blur; many plans, and many changes. Amid the fluidity of our situation in our state and district – what has remained constant is the unwavering commitment of our school and parish community to provide our students with the most optimal educational opportunities possible. Moving forward, we acknowledge the delicate steps ahead; to balance a strong desire to return to normalcy with the reality of keeping students, staff, and families safe. At St. Monica School, we do not take this charge lightly. Please know that it is with great care that we have shifted learning spaces, practices, and plans to meet the needs and guidelines of the DESE and DOH, and those of our families. It is with great appreciation and humility that I welcome our families and thank you for entrusting your children to us. It’s going to be a \_\_\_\_\_ year. No, that wasn’t a typo, it is as accurate as I can be on August 13<sup>th</sup>! It is my hope as we progress forward that we will be able to fill that blank space with some awesome adjectives and have some fun while doing so. So let’s get to it! **St. Monica School will begin classes on Tuesday, September 1, 2020 for Grades 1 – 8. Pre-K and Kindergarten will begin September 8, 2020.**

### **New Faces**

We have many new faces joining us this year. We are blessed that new families have found their way to our community. I am confident you will be enthusiastically welcomed and oriented to the traditions of St. Monica School. Please do not hesitate to jump right in and be involved.

Our staff has changed a bit as well. Please help me welcome Mr. Daniel Simard, our new apprentice principal. He comes to St. Monica with wonderful experience and a strong command of our Catholic faith. He is tasked with learning the role of a principal through this unique hands-on experience. Mr. Simard will also be teaching Religion in the Junior High. We are very fortunate to have Mr. Simard for this year!

Michelle Ramsden will be joining us in the role of technology instructor. Mrs. Ramsden brings years of instruction and technology building to our school. She is also redesigning and managing our website and supporting all the faculty with on-boarding Google Classroom this year.

Mrs. Cheryl Boremi will be teaching Grade 5 this year. A veteran of Catholic education for over twenty years, Mrs. Boremi is excited to teach in her hometown.

Mrs. Emily Fulciniti will be taking over Grade 4. I am so excited to have Mrs. Fulciniti join our team. She was one of my favorite students when I taught fifth grade many years ago at St. Louis School. She has spent the last three years teaching Grade 4 at St. Louis School in Lowell. Prior to that she was at the Lawrence Public Schools.

### **Welcome to all!**

School is going to look different this year. To keep everyone safe, we need to follow policies and procedures that are new to us. Please know that these changes are for everyone's safety and well-being. Hopefully, these modifications will be short term and we will be able to return to our former ways soon.

This email is to answer some very general questions about the beginning of the year. There will be three (3) emails to follow over the next few days:

1. Mrs. Tully will send out your teacher's name for Kindergarten and Grade 1.
2. Notices and directives from our school nurse, Mrs. Sanborn
3. A detailed 2020-2021 School Year Response Plan for St. Monica School

The model we are following limits students' exposure to other people outside their classroom teacher and classmates. Students will not be able to change classes or visit the cafeteria. Students will be in their room for lunch, and when specials begin, the specialists will be coming into the classroom. It is important to get a secure handle on the day to day routines before integrating specialists into the mix. Our goal is, after the first month or so, if things are moving along well, to slowly integrate the specials one at a time. **To clarify, when students start on September 1<sup>st</sup> the only special they will have will be Technology. As things progress, French, Art, Music, Movement, and Gym will be introduced.**

### **Medical**

If a student is even the slightest bit sick, they should be kept at home. It would be wise to take your child's temperature before coming to school. If a student arrives at school displaying any symptoms that could be related to COVID-19, they will be sent home. It is important to have a plan in place when you are required to pick up your child due to illness. When you are required to pick up your child, they will be escorted outside to you.

If you go on vacation out of the state or country, you must follow Massachusetts quarantine requirements or provide a negative COVID -19 test within the recommended timeline.

It is also expected that St. Monica families follow the state guidelines of mask wearing in and out of school, practicing social distancing, and consciously avoid gathering of large groups. St. Monica School is being pragmatic moving forward to limit exposure and risk to the greater community. We ask that you do the same when you leave the building. We are only as strong as our weakest link. Please continue to hand wash, wear masks, and social distance.

### **School Arrival**

Parents and families are the first line of defense to keep our school safe for our students and staff. If your child is not feeling well, you must keep them home. Resources are available to catch the class on Zoom or video, and access any missed work on Google Classroom. It is not worth the risk.

### **Morning Drop Off and Entry**

Students will enter the building based on the location of their classrooms. Families with more than one student will follow the youngest sibling into the main building. Doors will open at 7:30 AM and students will proceed directly to their class. There will be a staff member at both main entrances checking in students. Parents and visitors are not allowed into the building.

Classes entering the front entrance on the church side will be: Kindergarten A (Mrs. Alaimo) and Kindergarten B (Mrs. Arasi), Grade 1B (Mrs. Korbey), Grade 4 (Mrs. Fulciniti), Grade 6 (Ms. Voltero), and Grade 7 (Mrs. Castagna).

Classes entering the main entrance, rectory side will be: Grade 1A (Mrs. Sylvia), Grade 2 (Mrs. Michaud), Grade 3 (Mrs. Law), and Grade 5 (Mrs. Boremi).

Pre-K 3 and 4 (Mrs. Ann Marie and Mrs. Lisa) students will be dropped off at the Ranch House, (the house in front of the rectory). After all the students have arrived in the main building, the Pre-K students will be brought over to their classrooms.

Students in Grade 2-8 are required to enter with their masks on and keep them on throughout the day. All students need to be in their classrooms ready to learn for 8:00 AM. Students arriving after 8:00 AM will need to enter through the Main Entrance. Parents are no longer allowed to sign their child in if late, we ask that you call the school to confirm their arrival.

### **Afternoon Pick Up**

As of the time of this letter, Methuen Public Schools will not be providing bus services to our students, when this changes, I will communicate that with our families. Also, we are still coordinating with the private transportation companies on pick up times and locations, those plans will be finalized soon.

Pre-K and Kindergarten students will be dismissed at the Park Street side doors at 1:50 PM. Classrooms will begin dismissal by grade at 1:55 PM, starting with the youngest, in the front of the building. Parents are to remain in their vehicle until you see your child's teacher.

All people picking up students need to practice social distancing, and wear a mask. It is incredibly important to be on time to collect your child. Any student not picked will return to their classroom until 2:15 and then to Extended Day. Late students for pick up will go out the main door. Parents must come to the door if they are late picking up their child and the child will come down to them.

### **What's New this Year**

Physically, there have been some changes to our building. The office area has been painted and freshened up. Also, summer was good to us – allowing us to repair the window trim for the café and bathrooms. We also had to do some purging of older items in common spaces and classrooms that inhibited thorough cleaning and proper spacing between students.

Desk-top shields have been ordered for every student. They are scheduled to arrive the last week in August. I have been told they are on the way....fingers crossed! Over half our Chrome books are in. The last order is on back order- but should arrive shortly.

Grade 8 will be using the cafeteria for homeroom so they are able to spread out. Extended day will be very limited this year and will relocate to the opposite side of the cafeteria. Specific instruction on Extended Day pick-ups will be out shortly. First day of extended day is Tuesday, September 8, 2020.

How exciting is it to be able to wear shorts year-round? I know some of our students will be thrilled with this concession! With the mask wearing and such, students should be as comfortable as possible. Students can wear the casual uniform or the gym uniform – whichever they are most comfortable in, shorts included.

### **What to Bring to School this Year**

Students in grades 2 – 8 are required to wear a face mask and have an extra one in their backpack. Face masks are optional for students in Pre-K to Grade 1, however, teachers will follow parents' directives regarding if their child is to wear a mask or not. Please have their names on the masks if possible and ideally attached to a lanyard. If a mask is found unattended and no claims it, it will be thrown away.

Students should also have an individual, non-pump, container of hand sanitizer to be kept at their desk. There are dispensers throughout the building and in each classroom, however in an effort to be as efficient as possible, students should have their own as well.

While the weather is cooperating, we are encouraging teachers to bring students outside as much as possible. Please keep a beach towel in a plastic bag in their backpack so they can take advantage of learning outside when possible. The towel will cushion their seat and allow for social distancing as well.

Please visit our website: [www.methuencatholic.org/school](http://www.methuencatholic.org/school), click on Summer Assignments and Supply Lists, and make sure all the required summer work is completed, and your child has their supply list items.

### **Meet the Teacher**

Teachers will set up a ZOOM meeting so parents and students can meet their teacher and get a virtual tour of their classroom prior to the first day of school. Teachers will communicate the time of their class's Zoom and login information to attend.

### **Snacks and Lunch**

*Just Like Home* will service our school on Thursday and Friday for lunch. It is a simplified menu. We are hoping to be able to add more days as the year progresses. Please make sure you pack daily snacks and beverages to stay hydrated throughout the day. There will be no access to bubblers. While students are eating in their classrooms, St. Monica School will be **peanut free**.

### **Parent Visits**

Unfortunately, we are not allowing any guests into the school. If a student forgets something, it can be dropped off at the entry window. Office staff will collect and deliver it as necessary. Please do your part to avoid forgetting things. Students requiring dismissal will be brought to the main entrance foyer. Parents will receive their children there.

### **Remote Learning Students**

Families who are choosing to remote learn will be able to pick up all consumables and texts required on Monday, August 31, Tuesday, September 1 or Wednesday, September 2 from Noon until 3pm. Please call when you arrive to the lot, drive around to the back of the building and your supplies will be neatly placed on a table. Parents will also be required to sign the Remote Learning Contract at that time. Commitment to remote learning can be modified at the end of the first trimester.

We are planning to have teachers ZOOM their Religion, Reading, and Math, lessons live while they are instructing the in person class. Once schedules are finalized, they will be shared with remote families. I expect there will be a trial run during our first week of half days. Our first week will be rough, (9/8 – 9/11) but I am confident by 9/14 we should have a good flow. I am sure there will be hiccups with connectivity and schedules, but we are trying to trouble shoot potential problems to be proactive and preventative.

Please enjoy these final days of August and prepare for a historical and memorable school year. Students should be finishing up summer work, preparing supply lists and getting excited to come back. Please assure your children we are excited to have them back in our building! Our students are the life of our community. They have been sorely missed.

I ask Mary, our Blessed Mother, to keep us in her protective arms as we move forward as one in faith and community.

St. Monica, pray for us.

St. Lucy, pray for us.

St. Francis, pray for us.

St. Julie, pray for us.

Most importantly, let us continue to pray for one another.

In Peace,

Mrs. Donna Henderson