



October 13, 2020

Dear Pacelli Families,

Happy October! One of my favorite times of the year! Who doesn't love the fall colors, crisp air, and everything pumpkin and apples?!

As we work through our second month of the new school year there are a couple of things I want to follow up on with all of you.

Knock on wood, considering everything happening in the world around us, we seem to be moving through the year as well as can be expected. We have been grateful that none of our staff or students have been extremely ill. We have had 6 individuals within our system who have tested positive for Covid since we opened. Additionally, we have had many individuals who have had to go on a 10 or 14 day quarantine, either due to interactions with the positive cases in our system or with someone who was positive outside of our school family. We need to be mindful that the interactions all of us have and the risk to exposure we participate in may not only impact us, but those around us. With Portage County continuing to be a high risk area, we all need to take extra precautions where possible. Being conscious of social distancing and taking safety precautions are guidelines we all need to follow to keep each other safe.

I am so proud of how our students, teachers, and staff have performed so far this year. There is definitely such a thing as "Covid fatigue," but overall many of the safeguards have become second nature. While some of our students or faculty occasionally gather in non-socially distanced small cohorts, this is primarily outside with a limited number of people. The vast majority of the time I see people just being farther apart from each other and having shorter interaction times. Mask wearing has gone well and, while it is not a miracle cure, any reduction of germ spread it provides can only help us in our goal to remain open five days a week, as we have.

Regarding our parent survey, I want to thank those of you who took the time to respond to the two questions we asked. Overwhelmingly there was appreciation for us being able to safely remain open for class in-person five days a week because of the safety measures we've put in place. There were some concerns brought up that we are working to address. As was suggested by several of you, we will have minimal fundraisers this year, and if we do have them, they will most likely look very different. We are continuing to work on ways to better serve our e-learners. There are a few facts that we must face: being in person is almost always going to be best, remote learning is easier as our kids get older, and many of our staff are continually tweaking how they are doing things to make it easier on both sides of the screen. We appreciate the extra work this is for most of our staff and their

willingness to try new things and continually work to improve our process as we progress throughout the school year. We have brought in extra support to assist with remote learning and will continually look for ways to make things better for everyone.

We had lots of compliments on adjustments that have been made to pick up and drop off. We had ordered hand sanitizers for every classroom in the system and have been frustrated with receiving defective equipment but we are working with the supplier to resolve the situations.

There were some comments about contact tracing in the surveys - when we originally started the school year, it was with the understanding that public health would do all contact tracing and we were not part of that process. Due to cases quickly increasing in Portage County after we opened, we have been put in a position to fill the gap that public health cannot meet. So, for now, once we are notified of a positive case within our system, we will internally determine who was a close contact within our buildings. The attached document helps to further explain. If there is a positive case in a household, in almost every case all household members would be close contacts. If a student is under quarantine due to being a close contact with a non-family member, siblings to that student are in a sense "close contact of a close contact." Due to our goal to keep our schools open as much as possible, these situations should be more closely monitored by parents and if you are able to keep all of your students home during this time period that would be preferred and is a recommendation of the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction (DPI) but not a requirement. Of course, anyone showing any signs of illness should be kept home. To date we have not identified any internal contact spread of Covid.

I want to give a huge shout out to our teachers who have gone over, above, and beyond to make this year work in ways I am sure they never imagined they would find themselves in. Learning new tools and managing both in-person and remote students is challenging to say the least. In light of that, we are going to add five eLearning catch up/teacher work days to our schedule between now and Christmas. **There will be no students in-person and no new instructional interaction on October 30, November 13, November 23, November 24, and December 11.** Teachers may do virtual one-on-one follow up with individual students at their discretion or assign homework or special projects to be done on these days but students will not be present in-person. All school offices will be open on these days, with the exception of the week of November 23-27 when offices systemwide will be closed for Thanksgiving.

I also want to take a moment to thank our principals for all of their hard work and dedication this year. Ellen Lopas has stepped into the role of Lead Principal and with that added responsibility is managing both Pacelli Catholic Elementary School-St. Stephen (PCES-St. Steve's) and Pacelli Catholic Middle School (PCMS). Greg Kaster has brought some fresh perspectives and wonderful experience to Pacelli Catholic Elementary School-St. Bronislava and our 4K program. Larry Theiss continues his excellent work at Pacelli Catholic High School (PCHS) as well as taking on additional responsibilities within the system in regards to food service, athletics and Title Funds, for which we are grateful. Cindy O'Sullivan, our Pacelli Catholic Schools Tim Copps Early Childhood Center Director, has also done a tremendous job in extremely challenging times and we appreciate her leadership in keeping our center operational for our youngest Pacelli Cardinals.

Behind the scenes there are many staff who have gone above and beyond this year including Tammy Robinson and Kristin Plaski in our finance department as we work through funding grants such as the Payroll Protection Plan (PPP) and the Emergency Sick Leave Plan (ESLP).

Our maintenance team has not only put increased cleaning protocols in place, but we are also working to install air cleaning systems in all of our school buildings. Installation at PCMS took place a couple of weeks ago. PCHS was already receiving an upgrade to its heating and cooling system but we have added an ionization system as well which will be installed in the coming weeks. The system for PCES-St. Steve's is on order and we are finalizing the quotes for both the Pacelli Catholic Schools Tim Copps Early Childhood Center (PCS ECC) as well as for PCES-St. Bron's. These systems will hopefully help keep our air cleaner in regards to Covid, but also for the long term with flus, allergies, colds, and other airborne viruses.

To summarize the important dates listed above, there will be no formal instruction, in-person or virtually, on October 30, November 13, November 23, November 24, and December 11 as those will be used as eLearning catch up days for students and teachers. Please make note of these changes on the attached updated version of the 2020-2021 school year calendar which can also be found at pacellicatholicschools.com/calendar.

In closing, I want to share with all of you a reminder of the importance of prayer in our lives and coming together with family (although with Covid, we may want to limit that to only our household units). I do think the routine of students being in class five days a week and having the ability to participate in athletics has brought great stability and routine to our children's lives. There is also great comfort to be found in routines such as family meals and conversations and prayers before bedtime. Working to strengthen our family units and supporting each other in our Catholic faith remains a focus of Pacelli Catholic Schools. We have a lot to be thankful for and focusing on what is good in the world and in our lives may be just what we all need to get through this year!

In Faith,



Cindy Weber
President