



Good afternoon!

I would like to thank the many members of the SJS Community who have contacted me with messages of gratitude, support and encouragement as we are in the midst of Week 3 of Distance Learning. Know that we are doing our very best to facilitate your child's learning, while trying to reduce your stress and anxiety as much as we humanly can, with God's help. I am also grateful for the many conversations, in which you shared your constructive suggestions.

I have been consulting and communicating with the SJS Administrative Team as well as many professionals from the Archdiocese Administration, both locally and from Central Administration. I am receiving and processing information from a multitude of sources and making every effort to share this information as soon as I can.

I would also like to thank those who have sent me a lovely outpouring of prayers and condolences as my family mourns the death of my beloved sister-in-law, Maria Graciela.

IMPORTANT POINTS:

1. SCHOOL PLAN

As requested by The Archdiocese of NY, I made a School Plan:

- 3/12/2020: I received official notification that school would close the next day, 3/13/2020. At our two previous Faculty Meetings in March, we discussed Distance Learning in the event that it became a reality. The Faculty and I discussed the copious resources available: technological, text books, workbooks, paper-and-pencil packets, and teachers were given the professional latitude of planning for each of their classes, as they always do, should Distance Learning be thrust upon us.
- The plan consisted of maintaining as much of our routine practices and moving toward Google Classroom for all Grades K-8 as our main platform. We have gradually done so, with the flexibility of not suddenly transitioning, but allowing adjustment time for Grades K-3.
- As you have seen from your child's work, we have many online and blended learning programs, including PEARSON, IXL, LEARNING ODYSSEY, READWORKS, etc.
- As I receive emails from educational vendors offering FREE materials, both online and printable, I have been sharing them with Faculty and Families to use.
- We started our Distance Learning Program on 3/16/2020, one full week ahead of many other schools and districts; there was no gap in access to instruction for SJS students.
- We originally were told that we would reopen on 3/20/2020 and that soon changed to 4/20/2020.





2. COMMUNICATION

- Upon being notified that school was to close, I twice notified the entire SJS Community via the IRIS ALERT System.
- I have utilized primarily email to communicate with the community, as well as seeing parents who needed materials from the school, as well as having telephone conversations with parents. I have been in direct, individualized contact with approximately 50% of the community; in addition, there have been a series of emails I have sent to the entire SJS Community. It is my intention to continue to email and call parents.
- I asked, early on, to alert me to any extenuating circumstances in regard to Distance Learning, and God forbid, any more serious circumstances.
- I have scheduled weekly full Faculty conference calls; in between, there is constant communication with individual teachers and smaller groups, as relevant to the issue(s) being discussed.

3. SCHOOL REOPENING

- I have not received any update regarding a change in the April 20, 2020, school re-opening date from the Archdiocese as of today, April 1, 2020.
- I hope you have heard the great news that SJS will be closed as originally planned: Wednesday, April 8 at Noon through Monday, April 20 at 8:00. At the present time, this means that there will be no obligatory communication between families and teachers.

4. LONG-TERM PLANS

The Archdiocese has reassured us that they will provide guidance for long-term planning (as they have for short-term planning).

5. ASSESSMENT

- **NYS ASSESSMENTS HAVE BEEN CANCELLED FOR THIS YEAR.**
- **Report Cards:** I am working on having the Parent Portal enabled so that you will have electronic access to Report Cards; I will inform you of how you will log on ASAP. We anticipate that Report Cards will be available on or about April 22, 2020.
- **Grading:** The 3rd Quarter ends on April 8. School was in session for approximately 6 weeks of the 3rd quarter. Those grades should be used as a strong indicator of each student's 3rd quarter grades. We will grade the assignments for these 3 ½ weeks with compassion, and as usual, we will use a variety of assessment tools. A Pass/Fail grading system was discussed and was not approved.
- Teachers have been asked to notify me immediately of any unusual patterns, such as students not submitting work; teachers will intervene, and reminders will be sent to the student and parent; I will make calls as needed. If we remain closed





past 4/20, the Archdiocese will provide more specific guidelines regarding grading.

6. INSTRUCTION

- Time each student should be spending on each subject.
- Academic Content Areas: We are following the Archdiocese's Guidelines for basic content areas for ELA, Math and Physical Education.
- The Special Subject Teachers (who are part-time here at SJS, and see the students 1-3 times weekly) and I discussed their weekly instructional time and decided that approximately 1/3 to 1/2 of their weekly instructional time, which winds up being 15-30 minutes weekly is a reasonable expectation for Distance Learning; in addition, they will supply links for supplemental enrichment.
- Teachers will post work by 8:15, the ordinary start of our school day, with exceptions that I may grant. I suggest that from 8:00 until 8:15, you may want to pray The Prayer of St. Joseph, read the Daily Gospel, listen to a Song of the Day, recite the Pledge of Allegiance, review the daily weather report, and make any relevant family announcements. Likewise, you may end the day with The Our Father as we do in school.
- Differentiating work: For those students who complete all of their work on time and of satisfactory quality, teachers may provide more enrichment via multiple online programs, and offer appropriate links from the multitude of vendors whose free materials I have forwarded, and new ones which are being provided by the Archdiocese such as Discovery Learning, and consider virtual tours (museums, cathedrals, The Vatican, etc.).

7. TECHNOLOGY

- Google Classroom is our main platform; we are allowing for transition time for the lower grades K-3, and by report, all is working well; as we want all SJS students to eventually be able to access GC easily, so while we are completely flexible, we are asking parents/students to log on to GC for "practice".
- Links to all of our programs have been provided by the teachers.
- Use of platforms such as ZOOM: Under the Archdiocese of NY Teachers' Collective Bargaining Agreement, the administration may not mandate use of online platforms. While the Archdiocese approved the use of ZOOM, many regulations must be abided with in order to be in alignment with Safe Environment Regulations; if teachers are confident in its implementation, they are permitted to do so. Some have used ZOOM to conduct class meetings.
- Some of the teachers have used other platforms that allow the teacher to record his/her voice and demonstrate a lesson on a whiteboard, such as Educreation. The feedback from parents has been positive-again, this is being encouraged, but cannot be mandated.

8. CHANGES TO THE SCHOOL CALENDAR





ST. JOSEPH SCHOOL

30 MEADOW AVENUE, BRONXVILLE, NEW YORK 10708

(914) 337-0261
FAX (914) 395-1192

- Other than school not being open, we have not had the need to change the school calendar in terms of days school we will close or open at this time.
- School Events: Science Fair: Because the Science Fair projects were assigned and in most cases started well before school closed, the teachers and I agreed that projects should be continued and completed as feasible. If this presents an extenuating hardship for your child, please email your child's science teacher and cc me on the email as well. The Science Fair event which was scheduled for March 31, at school, is being postponed; as of now, a new date has not been determined.

9. CONTINUING OUR CATHOLIC IDENTITY AND SCHOOL IDENTITY

- I think it is important for us not to lose a sense of who we are, as a community, at this time.
- The Church is providing many online resources such as daily Mass, and Holy Week Services; while we know this is a huge disappointment to many, let's be grateful that we have the resources to participate virtually.
- A banner: SJS STRONG and Distance Learning: Praying Together Even When Apart has been hung from our school on the Kraft Avenue side. Consider taking a picture with your family, while maintaining social distancing, and send it on - we will post it on Instagram.

I pray that all in our SJS Community will not be gravely impacted by the current Pandemic. We pray for those who have been gravely impacted and their families.

God bless all that you do.

Stay safe.

SJS STRONG and Distance Learning!

Respectfully,
Mary Ellen Sanchez,
Principal, SJS



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