

August 6, 2021

Dear Parents,

As you and your families continue to enjoy the summer, the staff and I are returning to school this month to wrap up preparations for the 2021-2022 school year. We are very excited about all that this year will bring! As you have come to Mass or perhaps played on the playground this summer, you have undoubtedly noticed the construction fencing and related activity taking place at the school entrance. What lies beyond that fencing is truly amazing! We can't wait for you to see our new secure entrance, new main office area, and new student services spaces when you come to Back-to-School Night in just a few weeks! In the meantime, as we put the finishing touches on these areas to get them ready for full service, we will be delaying the opening of the school office a few days to allow time to fully complete the work to be done. In addition, our entire staff will be in an all-day meeting on Monday, August 16, so the office will re-open on Tuesday, August 17 at 9 am. Thank you for your patience as we use this time to prepare to better serve you and your children.

As we continue to move through the COVID-19 pandemic together, it has been universally recommended that students be in school, in person, five days per week. We are committed to making this happen, and we will be offering only in-person learning in our classrooms for the 2021-2022 school year. We are proud that we were among the first in the area to return to school in person last school year, and even prouder of the incredibly successful year we had! We are one of 107 schools in the Diocese of Cleveland, and none of us has experienced a single case of COVID-19 that could be traced to the classroom. We have learned a lot since March 2020, and armed with that knowledge, we look forward with hope to a fresh new school year!

With all of this in mind, the physical, mental and social-emotional health of our students, staff and school families continues to be the top priority in our planning for the 2021-2022 school year. Yesterday afternoon, we received the awaited guidance from the Diocese of Cleveland and Summit County Public Health that will assist us in establishing our school's health and safety policies and protocols. During the next week, I will be consulting with school and parish leadership and staff to hone in on the specifics of these policies and protocols. Please watch for an email communication on Thursday, August 12 with our detailed Saber Strong 2021-2022 Health and Safety Protocols.

In the meantime, we realize that the topic at the forefront for many families is whether masks will be worn in school this year. At this time, based on the guidance we have received, in general, face masks will be optional in indoor and outdoor settings. Mask use indoors is strongly encouraged for adults and children who are not fully vaccinated. Outdoors, masks are not required however, people who are not fully vaccinated are encouraged to wear a mask in crowded outdoor settings or during activities that involve sustained close contact with other people who are not fully vaccinated. Of course, we will continue to employ all the other layers of protection we used last year, and we will be establishing additional parameters for settings in which masks will provide an extra layer of protection and will be required. These, and all of our COVID-19 policies and protocols, will be shared in our August 12 communication.

Having said this, please understand that this is the plan at this time, and we are prepared to pivot and make changes at any time as necessary to protect the well-being of our students, staff and families. This is a rapidly changing situation, as we have seen in just the last few weeks, and our policies and protocols need to be able to change just as quickly when needed. As always, our decisions are based on local data from our school and surrounding community, not just what is happening across the state or nation. As we have since March 2020, we consider data from Summit County Public Health and consult with our neighboring public and Catholic schools, all of which are implementing a mask-optional policy at this time.

Our theme for the 2021-2022 school year is What Faith Can Do, based on the life and lessons of Blessed Carlo Acutis. Together, we will be learning much more about him and our theme this school year, but we already know what faith can do, as we have seen it in action and are buoyed by the hope of what faith will do this school year! As a Catholic, Christian community, we need to remain united as one in the face of issues that threaten divisiveness. There are more gray areas this school year than last in relation to COVID-19, and with mask wearing being optional, we respect the right of each family to make the choice that is best for them. Our expectation is that you and your children will also respect these choices. We have children in our school who are vulnerable to illness, who have a vulnerable family member, or whose family has suffered a loss due to COVID-19. These families feel as strongly about wearing a mask as others feel about not wearing one. Respect for each individual choice will be shown in our school at all times.

Just as I recognize that each of you has made, and will continue to make, decisions that work best for your families, I appreciate your understanding of the serious responsibility I assume in caring for each and every one of your children as I make decisions on their behalf. Your support is vital as we partner together to prepare for another successful school year. I look forward to sharing more with you on August 12, and to seeing all of you and your children very soon!

Sincerely,

Mrs. Jennifer Woodman  
Principal