



March Madness

March 21, 2021

Dear Parents,

Here's to hoping we do better in school this week than I am doing in my family bracket! There are 34 of us in the bracket... and at last check, I was #23, and have the lowest possible max points of everyone because of some bad, early picks! So instead, I am placing my bets on a Covid-free week!

Please see the notes that follow, as there are several important footnotes!

Go Crusaders! ... (or Wolverines!)

Yours,
Leslie

1234567891011

¹ Standardized Testing

Second through eighth grade students will be taking the Iowa Test of Basic Skills this week – the week of March 22. Lower school students' testing schedules will be determined by their homeroom teacher. **Middle school students will be testing during the mornings of Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday.** Grades 2, 3, 5, 7, and 8, will also be taking the CogAT (Cognitive Ability) tests. The Iowa Test of Basic Skills (ITBS) is a nationally normed achievement test. The CogAT allows us to take a look at achievement in relationship to ability and is one indicator of learning differences. Our testing schedule on the CogATs is a little bit off because we didn't test last spring. Going forward, students will take the CogAT portion of the Iowa Tests only in grades 2, 5, and 7.

Please try to avoid late arrivals and early dismissals this week. It is VERY challenging to administer make-up tests. However, if your student is ill or symptomatic for Covid, please keep them home. We will consider the situation and whether to make up those tests another time.

² In my school-wide communication last week, I made a statement regarding physician clearance for **return-to-play for athletes who are recovering from Covid-19.** After some discussion,

we have revised that wording to encourage, rather than require, clearance from your physician for athletes who are returning to play after a bout with Covid-19. Please note the following:

There is some concern that students who have had covid-19 (or any virus) may be at risk for myocarditis. The increase in risk continues to be investigated at this time. We encourage parents to consider their own child's circumstances and consult with your doctor for advice before having your child return to athletic competition.

³ Remember that following a long month of March with no days off, the **Easter Break if from Holy Thursday, April 1st, through Sunday, April 11th.**

On the Saturday, April 3, my husband and I will finally get to head to California to meet James Mitros who just celebrated his first birthday this week. I know that families are looking forward to vacations or visiting families. **As Pennsylvania lifted its quarantine on travel, so we were glad to do so at Aquinas as well. Should you have travel plans over the break, please do be alert to any symptoms after travel or large gatherings, and out of respect for the school community, following the break, keep at home any and have a test done for any children who may have a cold, a sore throat, headache, etc.** In this last surge in the high school, we had a total of *twenty-one cases develop in the space of one week between students in grades 8 – 12, along with teachers.* Not all of those cases originated with a contact at school; however, once there was one case, we believe it spread quickly within teams and extracurricular activities.

⁴ **Great news! Parents of middle school students will have the opportunity to see the play that your own child's grade is performing during Holy Week!** Our middle schoolers are preparing productions of *Prince Caspian* (7th Grade), *The Voyage of the Dawn Treader* (6th Grade), and *The Lion, The Witch, and the Wardrobe* (8th Grade). These favorites from C.S. Lewis' *The Chronicles of Narnia*, were scripted years ago by Mrs. Mutschler. They were a perfect choice for this year's Middle School plays. Lower School Students will all have the opportunity to see one of them during the school day. Since only one grade level is involved in each production, we are inviting the parents (and siblings) of the performing grade to see the show in the evening. The 8th Grade performance date will be announced soon, as it has been pushed back to after Easter since 8th grade was not in school last week, and several are still quarantined this week. Dates are:

- 7th Grade in *Prince Caspian*, Tuesday night, March 30th, 7:00 p.m.
- 6th Grade in *Voyage of the Dawn Treader*, Wednesday night, March 31st, 7:00 p.m.

We are delighted that, in this format, parents will be able to join us. Seating will be socially distanced by family!

⁵ **The sophomore field trip (Amtrak to Latrobe; visit to the railroad museum and Lincoln Highway museums in Latrobe) is ON for Friday, March 26th. Mr. Dolan will be sending a reminder of those details this week.** Because the sophomores had a round of quarantines prior to this week, they largely avoided the contacts from this past week! It should be a fun and Covid-safe trip for these students who have learned much about the railroad in their US History Class this year!

⁶ High School Parents:

- **This year's Spring Dinner Dance will be held on Friday, April 23rd** (date changed from Friday, April 16th, to make allowance for any possible surge in Covid cases following spring break). It will be a catered Dinner Dance held in the Rhodora. Students will be receiving invitations at school this week. There are some details related to safety protocols; but we are glad to have a dance this year! Please see the attachment for dance guidelines.
- **There will be a dress-down day for high school students only on Friday, March 26th.** Students may dress down for a DOLLAR to purchase recycling receptacles for each high school to facilitate a recycling project initiated by sophomore, Mary BouSamra. No shorts, please. And no midriff or inappropriate shirts/tops.

⁷ The **school calendar for 2021-2022** will be published this week. There will be a staggered start due to the construction on the building addition.

- **MIDDLE AND HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS WILL START ON TUESDAY, AUGUST 31ST.**
- **LOWER SCHOOL WILL START ON TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 7TH.**
- **PRESCHOOL WILL START ON WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 8TH.**

⁸ **The Art for Life event will be held this week, March 22nd-26th.** Students in middle and high school are welcome and encouraged to create a piece of artwork, through any medium, with the theme of "Celebrating Life" in mind. This includes human life, animals, plants, nature, etc. **The art display and voting will take place in the lobby of the Rhodora on Thursday, March 25th, the Feast of the Annunciation, as well as on Friday. (\$1 = one vote).** All who submit art will earn a dress-down day, and winners will receive gift cards. **The money collected from voting will be donated to Birthright of Pittsburgh, which is a pregnancy help center that offers life-affirming assistance to women and couples in pregnancy crises.** We are looking forward to seeing (instead of tasting) your artistic talents!

⁹ Along those lines, **PRO-LIFE TEE SHIRT DAY is April 23rd.** On that day, students may wear a pro-life tee shirt from any prior year, or wear this year's shirt, available to be ordered in advance. **ALL ORDERS ARE DUE BY MONDAY, MARCH 22nd, IN THE FRONT OFFICE.** Thank you to Lisa Clerici for the production and distribution of the shirts! Please print and complete the order form and send to the office by Monday, 3/22.

¹⁰ **Vivat Vita, the pro-life club, is offering high school students the opportunity to view "Unplanned" -- the story of Abby Johnson's conversion from participating in the abortion industry at Planned Parenthood, to her life as a pro-life activist.** Because of its mature content, this is only available to high school students, and **only with parent permission.** The viewing will be after school on **Friday, March 26th, in the triples. Each student must have the attached permission from their parents.** Ms. Coyne and other teachers will watch the movie with the students.

¹¹ For those who ordered **Easter Candy from BETSY ANN, pick up will be on Wednesday, March 24th, from 2:00 to 4:00 in the gym.** Older students (MS/HS) may pick up the family order from the gym to take home; or parents can come early before the busses, or come late for

pick up in order to park and stop in the gym for the orders. We will send a reminder as the date approaches.