

## Coronavirus Message #9

Dear SRV Community,

As we enter into week five of mandated school closing, I wanted to reach out with an update about our efforts to solicit feedback to make [SRV@home](#) even more robust and with some guidance about how to attain the best mental health outcomes for ourselves and our children after the crisis has passed.

### **What we Know**

As of today and according to the [PA Department of Health](#), there are 24,199 confirmed COVID-19 cases in Pennsylvania. As per the Governor's order last week, students in Pennsylvania will not return to school this year.

### **What the School is Doing**

As part of our ongoing efforts to make [SRV@home](#) the best alternative to in-person teaching, the School is taking additional steps.

- We have been soliciting feedback from teachers about how the past few weeks have been going.
- Teachers at SRV engage in consistent reflective practice through Learning Circles during the regular school year. Building on this, teachers will be sharing online teaching strategies and practices in their Circles as part of our weekly virtual staff meetings.
- The SRV Board of Trustees has been making calls to individual families to see how they are doing and sharing that feedback with the Administrative Team.
- You can expect to receive an invitation to fill out a survey about your experience with [SRV@home](#) so far. The survey will be conducted by an outside vendor, Measuring Success, and so the invite will come from them and SRV.

SRV will use this qualitative and quantitative data to make improvements to [SRV@home](#) and we hope to make the program even more robust while maintaining a focus on the student-teacher connection.

### **What Students and Families Can Do**

Be sure to respond to the forthcoming survey. The more participants, the more fidelity the data will have and the better able the School will be to meet your needs.

We all want to make sure that we mitigate any negative, long-term impacts that the coronavirus crisis may have on our well-being and that of our children. Please consider this summary of Guidance from the American Psychological Association that Susie Metrick, SRV's School Psychologist, put together. These suggestions to attain the best mental health outcomes are based on research performed during and in the aftermath of other large scale epidemics (e.g., Zika, Ebola) and other disasters.

**Social media may escalate anxiety more than traditional media.**

This research shows that the more people read the news on social media as opposed to traditional news sources, the higher the perception of their own risk, often inaccurately.

**Too much media of any kind can undermine mental health.**

People with the highest exposure to media/news had more acute stress, especially those who had experienced more distress during past crises.

**Trustworthy information sinks in.**

Research shows that most people can form rational perceptions about their own risk when presented with good, succinct information.

**Managing stress ASAP can prevent long-term troubles.**

Being mindful about stress and coping is important from the beginning, and should not be put off until "this is all over." Eating well, maintaining regular sleep habits, exercising, taking media breaks, and including fun and happy activities, every day is things we can do now to take care of ourselves, and prevent later build-ups of stress and other mental health problems.

**Lack of control fuels stress.**

Fear ratchets up our perception of personal risk and is exacerbated by the experience of not having control over our experience. Narrowing our focus and plans to shorter periods of time, like the day and week ahead, allows us to feel more empowered about things we know and can do.

**Quarantines and isolation, especially when prolonged, can increase the odds of negative outcomes.**

However, we can implement protective measures against such outcomes by following some of the above recommendations and making sure we remain digitally connected to friends and family. In addition, for children, the APA recommends open communication between parents and children, web-based educational videos to promote a healthy lifestyle at home, some of which have been recommended through SRV@Home, and online services by psychologists to help children cope with tension and anxiety.

For further information and guidance, there are many resources, including the research document these suggestions were based on, available through the [American Psychological Association](#) and the [National Association for School Psychologists Families & Educators section of the COVID-19 Resource Center](#). And if you feel like your child needs extra support or you would like further guidance, please contact Susie Metrick at [sumetrick@gmail.com](mailto:sumetrick@gmail.com).

**What to Expect from Here**

I'm sure that you share my disappointment that we will not be able to experience the important culminating events of the 2019-20 school year in the ways that we typically do. We are going to adapt in the way we have been over the past four weeks and honor our students' accomplishments in any way we can. While all of our

plans are not completely solidified, I want to share with you this [Update on Events](#) document that will be added to the School's website and updated as we make further determinations about the spring events.

Students may have left any variety of items at the School. We are determining how we can combine efforts and coordinate a single pickup of any materials that you might need for one of the virtual spring events and items left behind, and do this all in a safe manner and according to government guidelines.

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I am forever indebted to the heroes that I see in the news every evening. The selflessness of the hospital workers, first responders, grocery workers, truckers, and delivery people, and others that are sustaining life through these difficult times deserves recognition. Many of you are in these positions, so I sincerely thank you on behalf of the School. I am also indebted to the staff and families of SRV. Managing the continued education of our children while parenting, working, and surviving must feel insurmountable. You didn't ask to be thrust in this situation but you are showing amazing character anyway. You are my heroes because you are taking care of our most precious of gifts, children, and because like the late Fred Rogers, I also think that "anyone who does anything to help a child in his [her] life is a hero to me."

Take Care,

Rod Stanton  
Head of School  
The School in Rose Valley