

CORONAVIRUS (COVID-19) UPDATES

August 7, 2020

Dear St. Mary's Families,

St. Mary's School remains committed to providing our students and families with an educational experience of excellence grounded in our Catholic faith. As we reopen our school in September, also foremost in our planning is keeping our entire school community healthy and safe. In our efforts to create a positive and healthy learning environment for the fall we have designed a comprehensive reopening plan that is flexible enough to be responsive to the ever-changing impact of COVID on our local community. That plan, which is presented here, will guide us at least through mid-October. At that point, or sooner, we will reevaluate our plan as we learn more through the recommendations of our expert partners.

Our reopening plan encompasses guidance from the Minnesota Department of Health, the CDC, and the American Academy of Pediatrics and was developed with the help of our priest, parent, and teacher task force. Our goal is to reopen school balancing the educational/social needs of students with protocols and procedures in place that will significantly lower transmittable health risks due to COVID-19 to students and staff. We will implement safety and health measures and place limitations or restrictions on some aspects of life at St. Mary's School. We are committed to working in partnership with you to move forward with confidence and cautious optimism as the new school year begins.

We recognize the reality that some students, families and/or teachers/staff may become exposed to or identified as having COVID-19 which will then require distance learning. We have learned much from the distance learning experience of the spring and have taken into consideration your perspective and the teachers' perspectives on how we can improve the at-home learning experience for those who may be faced that option throughout the school year.

There is still much unknown about COVID -19 and how it will impact our school community in the year ahead. Our plan is flexible and will adapt to significant shifts in

the risk levels related to major surges close to and within our community. We will be prepared to shift to short or longer-term closing of the school building based on these changes. We will also be closely monitoring the educational and emotional progress of our students to assess how they are adjusting to this dynamic environment. Our teachers are prepared to adjust quickly in these events to ensure continuity in learning for our students. We will begin the year helping our students become proficient in the digital platforms that will support in-person and distance learning. These are robust tools that support the organization of learning and provide the opportunity for interactive learning experiences at home and school.

Our plan supports a separation or learning cohort model for students which will assist with limiting exposure throughout the school building. This will help lower the number of students who may need to quarantine if and when students become symptomatic or test positive for the Coronavirus. Families will need to keep their children home from school if they have a temperature or have symptoms that are potentially COVID related to protect the rest of the community from a spread. This plan will continue to evolve in the weeks and months ahead.

We are eager for our students to return to the classroom for in-person learning. While things may look a bit different, we remain the same at our core: A school that loves your children and wants to partner with you to help them grow and thrive as learners and young people of faith. Thank you for putting your trust in us during these uncertain times.

Sincerely,

Mrs. Tracy Bertrand Sigurdson, Principal

Pope Francis' Coronavirus Prayer of Protection

O Mary, you always shine on our path as a sign of salvation and of hope. We entrust ourselves to you, Health of the Sick, who at the cross took part in Jesus' pain, keeping your faith firm. You, Salvation of the Roman People, know what we need, and we are sure you will provide so that, as in Cana of Galilee, we may return to joy and to feasting after this time of trial. Help us, Mother of Divine Love, to conform to the will of the Father and to do as we are told by Jesus, who has taken upon himself our sufferings and carried our sorrows to lead us, through the cross, to the joy of the resurrection. Under your protection, we seek refuge, Holy Mother of God. Do not disdain the entreaties of we who are in trial, but deliver us from every danger, O glorious and blessed Virgin. Amen.

St. Mary's School

Reopening Plan for the 2020-2021 Academic Year

Mark Your Calendars:

Opening Day of the 2020- 2021 School year is September 8, 2020!

We've been working hard to create a comprehensive plan to ensure we could be back at school for in person learning - and offer a distance learning experience for those who may need it throughout the school year.

At this time, our plan is to begin face to face learning in September. We may need ot transition between the following scenarios as needs arise.

- Scenario 1: **Face to Face**

Full on-campus learning will take place as regularly scheduled.

Teachers and student will interact as usual, following the healthy and safety measures described in the health and wellness guide.

On-campus teach and learning will be designed to allow a smooth transition to distance learning.

Digital learning platforms (SeeSaw, Google Classroom, Zoom) will be used to some extent in the classroom so students are trained and ready in the event that distance learning becomes necessary.

- Scenario 2: **Face to Face with Individual Accommodations**

Individual students or teachers may face extended absences from school due to COVID-19 exposure, diagnosis, family quarantine, or other health concerns.

In these cases, distance learning will be provided on an as-needed basis.

- Scenario 3: **Full time Distance Learning**

School-wide distance learning may commence due to an outbreak of COVID-19 that requires closure for quarantine and sanitization of the building.

This is our least desirable option and we would strive to return to on-campus learning as soon as possible.

Building Entrance

- ✎ Door 3 will be the main entrance into the school for K-8. Play Island Preschool will enter/Exit Door 1.
- ✎ School hours for all students remain the same: 8:10 AM to 2:55 PM.
- ✎ Students will be allowed in the building **no earlier than 7:45 AM.**
- ✎ Students will enter the building through doors assigned by grade level to minimize wait time for entering the school.

The Classroom Learning Experience

Students will practice social distancing in the classroom.

- ✎ •Room arrangements have been altered to allow for extra space between desks at all grade levels.
- ✎ •Preschool – 8th grade classes will be in self- contained learning cohorts with some of their specialist teachers coming into their classrooms to teach.
- ✎ •Students in Preschool – 5th grade will have their own school supplies and math manipulative kits to avoid sharing and the need to constantly disinfect..
- ✎ •Middle school students will spend their day with a learning cohort of the same students. Classroom teachers will be moving from room to room. Our goal is to limit the amount of student movement throughout the building.
- ✎ • When moving between classes, students will keep to the right side of hallways to limit the spread of airborne germs.

- ✎ •Any shared items will be disinfected between student uses
- ✎ •Off campus field trips will be restricted until further notice.

Health Protocols

The health and wellbeing of our students, staff, and parents is our highest priority.

- ✎ •Parents will take their children’s temperature at home daily and review the healthy kid’s wellness checklist at home.
- ✎ •All students will have their temperatures taken prior to entering the school building each morning. Those with a temperature of 100.4 degrees F, or higher will be sent home.
- ✎ •There will be increased hand washing throughout the day including: to start the day, before and after recess, lunch, and after using the restrooms.
- ✎ •Teachers will review respiratory etiquette with students: cough and sneeze into elbow then wash hands.
- ✎ •Signage will be placed throughout the school promoting healthy practices.
- ✎ •Each student will bring his or her own water bottle daily.
- ✎ •Hand sanitizer is placed in every classroom in the school.
- ✎ •Students who are experiencing symptoms of COVID-19 will be placed in our COVID-19 designated area while they wait to be picked up.
- ✎ •Teachers experiencing symptoms of COVID-19 will be sent home.

- ✎ •Should a teacher contract COVID-19, depending on the degree of exposure to the class and others, a substitute teacher will be provided.
- ✎ •If a student or employee tests positive for COVID-19, we will work with Renville County health officials and Minnesota Department of Health to make sure all appropriate disinfecting and notification procedures are followed.

Cleaning Protocols

Cleaning and disinfecting key areas of the building will help limit the spread of germs.

- ✎ •We will increase the frequency of cleaning of bathrooms, the lunchroom and high touch surfaces.
- ✎ •Student desks, 1-5 will be disinfected as needed throughout the day.
- ✎ •PreK/K and 6th-8th grade tables will be disinfected as needed throughout the day.
- ✎ •All classrooms will be cleaned and disinfected at the end of each day.
- ✎ •Weather permitting, doors and windows will remain open to improve airflow in the classrooms. Air conditioning units will also be used to help with air circulation.

Guests, Volunteers and Parents are restricted from campus during the initial phase of the school reopening plan.

- ✎ •Limiting the number of adults in the school building each day is a recommendation of the CDC to minimize the potential spread of the virus.
- ✎ •Parents picking up/dropping off students during the school day will come to the “Welcome Window” just west of the main door (Door 3). Will sign out/in your child and your child will be called down to door 3 to exit the building.

Lunch

The lunch experience will be modified for health reasons.

- ✎ •To allow for adequate physical distancing, students will seat themselves at every other seat at lunchroom tables. Areas will be marked off.
- ✎ • Student trays will be prepared for them as they move through the lunch line. At the end of the line they will be handed their tray and will go to their seat.
- ✎ . Lunch times will be staggered to avoid student congestion.

Face Coverings

Key ways to limit the spread of the virus include wearing face coverings and physical distancing.

- ✎ •With the exception of our preschool students, everyone entering and exiting school will wear a face covering.
- ✎ •Students in grades K-8 will wear a face covering throughout the day except for when they are in their seat behind their Plexiglas, during lunch, recess, and classes that are held outdoors. Mainly during “traveling” time. Face masks/neck gaiters that

cover the nose and mouth are acceptable.

 • Should a child not be able to tolerate a face covering for medical reasons, upon parent request, will need a note from his/her doctor identifying a mask can not be worn. As we abide with HIPPA we are not asking for specifics. We will work to make reasonable accommodations for those students who may not be able to wear a face covering due to a medical condition, mental health condition or disability that makes it unreasonable to wear a face covering.

 •Face coverings will be respectful of our Catholic environment, and must not contain any obscene, inappropriate, political, or otherwise distracting/offensive content on them.

 •Faculty and Staff will wear a variety of face coverings including face masks, gaiters, or face shields.

Recess

Active play is an important part of the development of children of all ages. Recess reinforces positive social interaction and physical development – but it must be done safely.

 •All students will wash or disinfect their hands before recess and will wash and disinfect hands after recess.

 •Recess equipment will be disinfected at least daily.

The Distance Learning Experience

 •Two digital platforms will support students if we have to move to distance learning for an extended period of time during the school year: Seesaw for K-2 and Google Classroom/Zoom for grades 3-8.

 •Other digital tools may be introduced in the classrooms in the fall including Epic!, IXL and Khan Academy.

Living our Faith

Helping our children grow in their faith continues to be the central pillar of Holy St. Mary's School.

 •Students will continue to participate in the sacraments but in different physical configurations that will ensure social distancing.

 •Daily prayer will help us begin and end each day mindful of our need for gratitude.

 •We will continue to attend Mass on Thursdays at 11:00 AM. We will follow the same guidelines as the church has received from the bishop. Students will continue to help prepare the mass but our number of individuals involved will be limited.

Communication

We know that our parents need and appreciate ongoing communication.

 •A designated space on the school website for updates related to COVID-19 has been created.

- ✎ •An update will be sent as needed that is specific to our procedures and protocols related to COVID.
- ✎ • RenWeb will be used to notify parents if we need to implement a school shut down.

Social/Emotional Health

The mental health of our students, parents and staff is a priority as we face the year ahead.

- ✎ •In person learning with new guidelines, as well as distance learning, will have some level of impact on the emotional wellbeing of everyone as we get used to this modified learning experience.
- ✎ •We will continue to build in creative ways for socialization, team building and engagement with classmates while remaining socially distant.

A Final Note:

Please know that this Reopening Plan is a fluid plan and will be continually reviewed and revised in response to new knowledge about COVID-19 and to new directives from the MDH, from the CDC, from Catholic Mutual and from Diocese of New Ulm. St. Mary's School will do its very best to mitigate the risk of COVID-19 to the entire school community! We ask that you keep in mind that this is a "plan" to reopen. As we know there is no such thing as a perfect plan. This is a difficult issue and not the way any of us had planned to start the school year. We are grateful for your continued patience and flexibility as we work to keep our students, teachers and school community healthy and safe as we prepare for in-person learning.

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"This calls for patient endurance on the part of the people of God who keep his commands and remain faithful to Jesus." Revelation 14:12