

St. Mary School-DeKalb Return to Learn Plan Fall 2020

Dear St. Mary School Family,

We ask that you set up a routine throughout the summer so you can talk to your children about the changes we are experiencing and even show them some new things. Encourage your child to discuss his or her feelings during these unusual days. This way, you can help your children visualize what is different and hopefully reduce anxiety about all the anticipated changes. This can include the use of cloth face coverings or reminding your child not to touch their face covering as much as possible and wash their hands frequently for 20 seconds with soap and water.

We also recommend that over the summer families try out different kinds of masks on their children to see what styles/fits make the most sense. We just ask that the designs are appropriate for the mission of SMS and that the children will be able to adjust to them. **Also, please know that during the first 2 months of school, our students and staff will be allowed to wear comfortable clothing that is still school appropriate. This allows for students and staff to be able to stay cooler during the hot days that we experience during the first two months of school. The normal dress code will be enforced beginning in October when the building is cooler. If you also have an outside canopy style tent that the school may borrow for the fall semester that would be much appreciated. Our plan is to do as much outside teaching as possible so that the students and staff do not have to wear face coverings when social distancing is maintained. The outside tents will be set up around campus to allow for social distancing. We are blessed with so much property to be able to do this.**

The following plan is set up as a Q & A document to help organize our return to learn plan that encompasses all aspects of our school day and learning environment. Thank you for your support and patience during this time.

Please understand that conditions are changing daily and guidance from the Illinois State Board of Education has been fluid with changes. We will do our best to keep you informed as we work hard to keep our students and staff safe. We will continue with our weekly communication and include any additional information as we receive it. This plan will continue to be reviewed and updated as guidance is shared from the ISBE, Rockford Diocese, IDPH, and CDC.

How will the morning drop off and dismissal routine work this year?

- **Please do not drop your children off before 7:20 AM since students will not be allowed to wait in the foyer doors as they have in previous years. Your children will have to wait outside or in cars until 7:25. The students will have to line up on the line markings outside of the foyer to maintain 6 feet apart. If you have multiple children, your family can stand together on one sidewalk marking.**
- See more information about drop off of **Before and Aftercare** in the latter part of this letter.
- Bus students will be dropped off by the main entrance as normal, but will have to get off the bus and line up on the sidewalk markings.
- Doors will open at 7:25.

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- All students will enter through the main entrance of the school in the morning.
- Students will have to wait outside and stand at least 6 feet apart to allow time for temperature checks.
- Temperature Checks: Touchless thermometers will be used each morning upon entering the building or going to class. Individuals who have a temperature greater than 100.4 degrees will not be permitted to enter.
- Face coverings must be worn to enter the building and must be worn throughout the day.
- There will be two staff members taking temperature checks in the morning as students enter the building.
- Staff members will have a radio to use to contact the office if a child has a fever greater than 100.4. The main office will contact the parent to make arrangements for pick up. Until pick up is made, the child will be placed in an isolated area near the office. The child will be given an N95 mask while he or she is waiting.
- Only students will be allowed to enter the building. **Only Preschool, Prekindergarten, and Kindergarten parents may enter the building with their child for the first week to get their child accustomed to the morning routine. All parents will need to wear masks during this time.** Mrs. Clark and Mrs. Cox will be standing in the main foyer near their classroom door to help give comfort to the children after the first week of school.
- All students will report to their classrooms with their book bags. The homeroom teacher will direct students to lockers in a staggered schedule to make sure that students are going to their locker in a safe and orderly manner that allows for the appropriate social distancing in the hallways.

Carline and Bus Dismissal:

- Bus students will be dismissed from Door 8. Students will be picked up by a staff member and practice social distancing as students are put onto the bus.
- Carline will work as normal; but, grades 4-8 will exit out of doors 2 and 3, grades Pre-School, Pre-Kindergarten, Kindergarten, and Third Grade will exit out of the main entrance, First Grade and Second Grade will exit out of the north doors near north parking lot.
- As students are waiting for their cars to pull forward, they will have to wait on the sidewalk markings to practice social distancing.

Are masks required for all students and staff?

- In certain cases, some students are exempt from wearing masks at school.
- At this time, students who are unable to wear masks at school because of medical reasons are required to provide the school with a note from the child's doctor stating the reason the student cannot wear a mask at school.
- ***Students should plan to have two cloth masks as part of their back to school supplies.***
- Face shields will still be provided to all students and staff. There will be times when face shields may need to be worn when a teacher needs to be able to see the child's facial expression and or mouth shape when learning to phonetically read or speak. This will be more common in the primary grades when students are still developing literacy skills. Parents can still ask for their child to wear a mask if they are not comfortable with the face shield during these specific times. **The face shield will only be worn in appropriate manners for instruction. The rest of the time students will be expected to wear a mask or other appropriate face covering.**

Will there be breaks during the day when my child doesn't have to wear a mask? What about when it is very hot in the building, will there be times when my child doesn't need to wear his or her mask?

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- Face coverings do not need to be worn outside if social distancing can be maintained.
- The teachers will be planning on teaching outside when it is feasible to allow for students to have breaks from wearing their face coverings.
- Face coverings will be removed during eating. However, social distancing will still be maintained.

How will physical distancing take place in corridors, bathrooms, stairways, and the school office space?

To ensure physical distancing in corridors, bathrooms, stairways, and school office space:

- Students will remain in their classrooms as cohorts (or “family groups”).
- Instruction will be delivered by the homeroom teacher for preschool through grade 5. For grades 6 through 8, subject-specific teachers move from classroom to classroom. The homeroom teacher will be part of the cohort/family group.
- As a cohort/family group, the students and homeroom teacher are required to wear masks during instruction and practice social distancing as much as possible.
- Specials teachers (art, gym, music, and library) will visit the classrooms. The students and the specials teachers are required to wear a face mask and practice social distancing.
- Face masks are worn by everyone (students, teachers, office staff, and visitors) while in the school building.
- COVID-19 safety signage and guidelines are posted throughout the school.
- Hall/corridor traffic plans have been established and marked to maintain social distancing.
- Physical distancing will be directed and monitored by floor markings, signage, and student supervision by all school staff.
- All faculty/staff members will be trained in COVID-19 school safety guidelines.
- Traffic flow in and out of the restrooms will be monitored.
- ***Water fountains will only be used to fill water bottles. Drinking directly from the fountain is prohibited. Signs will be placed on drinking fountains stating this.***
- ***There will be water filling stations put around the school campus to allow students and staff to fill their water bottles. If the water bottle caps/tops are twist off, the top will be left at the student desks for refilling so that the mouth piece is not touching the water cooler opening.***
- Classes will be separated during recess. After each cohort/family group uses the playground and/or any other shared equipment, they will be sanitized and ready for the next cohort/family group.
- Students, staff, and visitors are required to enter the school building from one entrance and exit through another.
- Signs will be posted throughout the building directing the flow of foot traffic entering and leaving the school building.
- Students are required to follow similar foot traffic patterns to minimize the spread of the virus.
- ***Touchpoints throughout the building during the day will be sanitized, this includes all restrooms after each use.***
- ***The building will be deep cleaned regularly before students arrive each morning.***
- ***Drinking fountains will be used for filling water bottles only. Students/visitors are not permitted to drink directly from the water fountains. Water filling stations will be placed around the school to allow for refilling water bottles/cups.***

- Plexiglas will be installed in the school office as a protective barrier between visitors and staff members.
- Plexiglas barriers will be installed in the bathrooms between the sinks and urinals to provide protection.
- Touchless soap dispensers will be installed in the community bathrooms.

What if my child needs time to de-stress if he or she is overwhelmed with the new rules? What type of coping strategies will be implemented for the students to return?

- If a child needs to have a cooling down time, the school will continue to use the school chapel or the computer lab as a place for the child to unwind and de-stress. Mrs. Davis, Mrs. Harmon, Ms. Black; or Ms. Lorena will also be available to monitor the child during this time.
- We recognize the importance of providing students and staff with extra social and emotional support as they return to school this year. The faculty will continue to do special welcome activities, extra time for building relationships and establishing new routines, and focus on coping strategies.

Will hand sanitizer be readily available?

- Touchless hand sanitizers will be installed in high traffic areas. Students will use these throughout the day in addition to frequent hand washing. Standalone hand sanitizer liquid bottles will be in all classrooms. We are currently ordering disinfectant materials to have an adequate supply when school begins. There will also be scheduled times for all classes to use the bathrooms in their cohort groups for frequent handwashing.

How will the classrooms practice social distancing this year?

- All seating will be spread out in the classroom to use the maximum amount of space. Classrooms will be cleared of any extra furniture to allow for additional space. Social distance will be observed as much as possible.
- Desks will face the same direction.
- There will be floor markings to enforce one way directions around the room.
- There will be no community sharing of school supplies. Each student will have their own supplies at their desk to use.
- Students will be expected to wash their hands or use hand sanitizer upon entering the building and also upon entering the classroom.
- Hand washing needs will be a part of the daily routine. There will time during the school day for classes to have scheduled bathroom and handwashing breaks.
- Grades 3-8 will have their own Chromebooks to use to minimize the use of class computers.
- Hand sanitizers and disinfectants will be in each room to allow teachers to use as needed.
- Canopy tents will be set up around campus outside to allow for shade for classes to have instruction outside as much as possible during the hot weather. Social distancing will be practiced.

How will lunch and recess work this year?

Changes will be made as to how lunch is prepared and/or served, and how recess will be adjusted for safety.

- Students are required to use hand sanitizer before and after lunch.

- Students are required to eat lunch in their homerooms with their own cohort/family group or outside if the weather permits.
- Hot lunch meals will be delivered to classrooms and students will remain in their classrooms for the lunch period or will be outside in a designated area to eat lunch while maintaining social distancing.
- Masks or face coverings can be taken off. Each student will be provided with a brown paper bag for the week to keep their mask inside of the bag during the time that masks are not worn so that the mask is protected. This is a common practice in the medical field.
- Cafeteria/lunch workers are required to wear appropriate PPE, including gloves and facemasks while preparing and/or distributing lunches.
- Social distancing is required during the lunch period.
- Social distancing will be followed during recess. Scheduled recess periods will be varied to allow students to remain in their respective cohorts/family groups.
- Playground equipment will be cleaned and sanitized before it is used by the next cohort/family group.
- **Temperature checks will take place again after lunch and recess for students.**

How will Library work this year?

- Library time will be on a staggered schedule when Mrs. LeBouef will go to the students' classrooms for grades PreK-5th grade.
- Selection of books will be brought into the classrooms by the library staff.
- Grades 3-8 will be able to access our library system through Follett online and also select the books that they would like to read. These books will then be checked out for them and will be brought to the student.
- Once books are returned, they will remain in a container for 72 hours before they are available again to other students.

How will Music work this year?

- Music classes will be taught in the classrooms by Mrs. Wolski.

How will Spanish work this year?

- PreK-8th grade Spanish will be taught in the homeroom classes, as appropriate. There might be one or two classes that need to use the Spanish room due to scheduling.
- The Spanish classroom will be disinfected after the class has exited.

How will Technology Class work this year?

- Grades 3-8 will be one to one with their devices. Ms. Black will go to these classrooms on most days. If there is a special project for a specific class that needs to use the technology lab, then the students will bring their devices to the technology lab and will social distance as much as possible to use to conduct class.
- PreK-2nd grade will go to the technology lab for class.
- Classes will be staggered to allow for proper cleaning and disinfection of the computers and/or devices between each class period.

How will Physical Education be taught? Will students use locker rooms to change for PE?

- Physical education will be taught outdoors if possible. If it becomes necessary to teach physical education indoors, physical education teacher will instruct the students in the classrooms wearing a mask and practicing social distance. Students will also be required to wear masks during this time.
- If physical education is held indoors; but, not in the classroom, students must adhere to social distancing and all activities must allow for 6-foot distances between students.
- Changing in locker rooms for physical education classes will be avoided and students are required to use hand sanitizer before and after physical education classes. **Students will be allowed to wear their PE uniform to school on days they have gym.**
- Handshakes, high fives, or other physical contact is prohibited.

How will Mass and Adoration work this year? Will the students be singing in choir groups?

- Masses will be scheduled on a weekly basis for grade levels on a rotating basis.
- We will follow Phase 4 guidelines of no gatherings of 50 or more.
- **Masses will be Livestreamed each week for students and families to view since not all classes can attend together each week.**
- Chairs will be placed 6 feet apart in the Cafeteria.
- Songbooks will not be used this year.
- No class choirs for this year until this is allowed.
- Facial coverings will be worn.
- There will not be any class choir.
- Mrs. Wolski, Mr. Vaupel, and student cantor will be taking turns singing.
- Students will still be allowed to serve as lectors.
- No altar serving will take place at this time as it is not being practiced currently during Masses at our parish.
- Adoration will be scheduled on a rotating basis like our All School Mass. All guidelines of Phase 4 will be followed.

Will we be able to go on field trips?

- At this time school field trips are to be discontinued until state and local health officials determine that it is safe to resume them. As restrictions are lifted, field trips and assemblies will be added when deemed safe.

Will visitors be prohibited from entering the school?

- The school will be limiting any nonessential visitors, nonessential volunteers, and activities involving external groups or organizations, as much as possible.
- All School Mass will only be open to the students and faculty this year.

How will large school events and parent teacher conferences look like this year?

- Schools are encouraged to hold parent programs such as back-to-school nights, and parent-teacher conferences virtually.

- Grandparents Day, Christmas Program, CSW, and other school traditional gatherings will be planned to follow Phase 4 guidelines. Many of these events will be virtual this year.
- Where not feasible or practical, they should be held individually, with the teacher meeting only with the child and the child's parent(s).

Will the volunteer requirement hours still be enforcing this year due to Covid-19 restrictions?

- The hours will still be a requirement. The hours will be reduced to 4 hours per family. All planning for events will be done after school hours and will follow the Phase 4 guidelines.
- There will still be need in helping with Home and School, the Lancer Legacy Ball, Athletics, and now to save money for the school we will be responsible in taking care of our school grounds. We will need help in mowing and trimming this school year.

How will school committee/group meetings work this year?

- All school committee/group meetings will have to give the school office a date and time of when a meeting will take place.
- The groups need to practice social distancing and face coverings must be worn.
- Groups cannot be more than 50.
- Virtual planning meetings are strongly encouraged as much as possible.

**What health and hygiene practices will be followed to ensure that the students and staff are safe?
What will happen if someone tests positive for Covid-19? What cleaning enhancements are being implemented in the building?**

- If we have a confirmed case of Covid-19, we will follow direction from the DeKalb County Health Department. This may include closing a classroom or the school for a period of time and shifting quickly to eLearning at home for students who are impacted. Many of our new procedures are designed to support contact tracing should a confirmed case occur. This will assist the Health Department with quickly identifying and contacting individuals who may have been exposed.
- We have stocked up on personal protective equipment, hand washing materials, and cleaning supplies.
- In addition to our regular cleaning, we'll be disinfecting more often in common areas like hallways, cafeteria, bathrooms, playgrounds, as well as high touch surfaces like lockers, door handles and desks.
- The night time cleaning will also include intense disinfection of these areas after hours to ensure students and staff are coming back to a clean building.

Will the Before and Aftercare Program still be available?

- Yes, both programs will be offered.
- Morning: Students arriving at 7:00 AM will continue to report to the main entrance for check in. Temperature checks will be taken upon arrival, and students will wash their hands.
- After school, students will be assigned to a classroom, gym, or cafeteria to maintain social distancing.

- Parents will continue to sign out their students in the LRC before going to the assigned area for pick up.
- Parents picking up must wear a face covering inside the building.

Health and Safety Guidelines from the Rockford Diocese Reopening Plan:

To ensure consistent temperature monitoring and hygiene standards:

- Diocesan schools will monitor the COVID-19 guidelines published by the ISBE (Illinois State Board of Education) and the IDPH (Illinois Department of Public Health).
- All employees will be trained in health and safety protocols relating to COVID-19.
- Per State and federal guidance, members of a school community who are sick should not return to school until they have met the criteria to return.
- Temperature monitoring devices are available and will be used each morning student, staff, and visitors enter the school building.
- Signage will be placed in main entranceways noting that persons may not enter the building if they have any currently known symptoms of COVID-19, such as: Fever, Cough, Sore Throat, Shortness of Breath, New loss of taste or smell, Congestion or runny nose, Difficulty breathing, Nausea, Chills, Vomiting, Fatigue, Diarrhea, Muscle and body aches, and Headache.
- Face coverings will be worn at all times
- Social distancing will be maintained
- When students are reported absent, school personnel should request specific information and ask about COVID-19 exposure and/or diagnoses.
 - COVID-19 diagnoses and exposure cases should be reported to the local health department.
 - The school will follow the ISBE, IDPH, CDC guidelines for students who were suspected of having COVID-19, whether they were tested or not, which state that 72 hours must elapse from the resolution of fever without fever-reducing medication and 10 days must pass after symptoms first appeared.
 - Students diagnosed with or exposed to COVID-19 will be tracked. Tracking methods include checking in with the school nurse/principal upon returning to school to verify the resolution of the symptoms and that any other criteria for the quarantine have been met.
 - Students or Staff returning to school following a quarantine period as a result of COVID-19 is required to check in with the school nurse or building administrator before they are admitted back into the school building.
 - Any individual within the school environment who shows symptoms should be immediately separated from the rest of the school population, held in a designated quarantined area, and sent home as soon as possible.
 - All quarantined areas will be cleaned and disinfected after each use per the health department guidelines.

- All individuals in the school building are required to wear face coverings unless they are younger than 2 years of age, having trouble breathing, or are unconscious, incapacitated, or otherwise unable to remove the cover without assistance.
- Schools should develop procedures to ensure 6-foot social distancing from other persons as much as possible.
- Individuals who have a temperature greater than 100.4 degrees Fahrenheit /28 degrees Celsius or currently known symptoms of COVID-19 (see above), may not enter the building.
- Frequently clean touched surfaces.
- Students should be given assigned seats and arranged in the same direction and if possible spaced 6 feet apart.
- Restrict sharing and borrowing any items.
- Restroom breaks will be scheduled so that students of the same homeroom attend together.
- Limit any nonessential visitors, nonessential volunteers, and activities involving external groups or organizations, as much as possible.
- Face coverings must be worn on the bus and no more than 50 individuals as outlined in Phase 4 should be on a bus at one time. More information will be coming from the DeKalb School District about bussing.
- Ensure that naptime mats are spaced at least 6 feet apart as much as possible.
- Students will be placed head to toe at naptime to further reduce the potential for viral spread.
- All groups/organizations that use the school building are to submit a plan to the pastor and principal that addresses procedures for program implementation during the public health emergency.
- All school activities must follow the gathering limits of Phase 4 of the Restore Illinois Plan.
- At this time school field trips are to be discontinued until state and local health officials determine that it is safe to resume them.
- Disinfecting spray and wipes are available and will be used in all areas of the school building.
- Hand sanitizer is available in all classrooms and offices in the school building.
- Cleaning protocols have been established and are implemented throughout the school day with additional deep cleaning/sanitizing nightly.

- In the classroom student desks should be spaced as far apart as possible and facing one direction. If tables are used in the classrooms, students should be separated as much as possible.
- Ventilation and airflow have been checked and where possible increased throughout the building.
- Protocols have been developed if a student/staff displays symptoms or tests positive during school.
- Procedures for consultation with local authorities for reporting positive tests.
- Should a student, staff member, or visitor exhibit signs of illness during the school day, the school will provide an N95 Mask for the individual who is showing signs of being sick and for the staff members assisting them.

The following plan has been reviewed by:

Father Russell-Pastor
Ashley Davis-Principal
St. Mary Staff Members
Susan Harmon-School Administrative Assistant
Tara Ship-School Custodian
Donna Klemm-Hot Lunch Coordinator
Chantal Manhart-ARNP, & NIU Nursing Instructor
Nicole Bachert-RN, CNRN
St. Mary School Committee

The plan follows ISBE Guidelines, IDPH Guidance, and CDC Guidance.

