



## Holy Redeemer School

4902 Berwyn Road, College Park, MD 20740  
www.holy-redeemer.org · school@holy-redeemer.org · 301-474-3993

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July 31, 2020

Dear Holy Redeemer Families,

I hope this letter finds you well and in good spirits despite all the challenges we are being called to navigate at this time. First, allow me to thank the entire Holy Redeemer School (HRS) community for your patience and understanding as I studied resources, pondered feedback, and considered suggestions to determine the best way forward for our special school. Your prayers, emails, phone calls, and kind words of support have been appreciated as we focused as an administration and teaching staff on our safe return for the 2020-2021 school year.

At the end of the spring distance learning semester our Academic Committee led by our Vice Principal, Ms. Crawford, and comprised of teachers from all levels, submitted recommendations for continuous improvement of our curriculum, strategies for learning, and teacher preparation. A recent survey of HRS parents on current feelings toward different instruction method scenarios was insightful. Last week, together with the committee and parent representatives with medical and educational backgrounds we reviewed guidelines from our governing body the Archdiocese of Washington. The procedures include great detail in regard to CDC and local authority directed stipulations for health and hygiene, academic rigor, catholic identity, access to resource services, extra curricular activities and more. With all of this information in mind I am now prepared to outline our approach to school in the fall. We will hold a virtual Back to School Night on August 20th with parents to share particulars about our framework. Until then, I have determined our goal for students to return to learning in a meaningful, academically productive, and safety-conscious manner is attainable.

To that end, and with physical distancing measures in place, I can share with you what the fall will look like here at Holy Redeemer School. At this writing, we are preparing for an on-time return to school on August 25<sup>th</sup>. Students in the primary grades, PK-3<sup>rd</sup>, will select one of options below and commit to the program for the entirety of the first quarter. A follow up email will be sent with the link to select the option that works best for your family. The following 2 options are available for our elementary grades:

### **Pre - Kindergarten to 3<sup>rd</sup> grade**

#### **Option 1 (PK-3<sup>rd</sup> Grade): Blended Learning (Hybrid model)**

- ❖ In-person standards based instruction with teachers and full social distancing measures implemented.
  - Mornings - 4 hours per day (Half day schedule)

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The reality of in-person classes will look much different in a physically distanced school environment. It will require creative use of all school spaces and demand extra patience and flexibility from everyone as we endeavor to create an environment conducive to excellence in learning. The following are just a few of the procedures we will follow as COVID-19 preventative measures:

- Increased coordinated disinfecting and cleaning of high contact surface areas throughout the school day.
- All staff, faculty, and students will be screened daily and have temperature checks prior to entering the building.
- All staff and students will be required to wear cloth masks inside the building.
- In person learning will adhere to a small group student cohort model. This means students will stay with their class throughout the school day.

*Students will continue in the afternoon via virtual learning or independent learning activities.*

- ❖ Virtually administered distance learning standards-based instruction with the utilization of Google Classroom and coordinating technology resources.
  - Afternoons 1 to 2 hours per day to include specials. (as determined by level and teacher).

### **Option 2 (PK-3<sup>rd</sup> Grade): Full Distance Learning**

- ❖ I acknowledge and respect the decision to keep your student(s) home regardless of the measures we take for in-person instruction. Therefore, a full distance learning plan will be offered to families who are not comfortable returning to campus.
  - The National Board of Professional Teaching Standards Recommends 1-2 hours online each day for students in grades Pre-K thru third grade. Teachers will utilize a mix of virtual live in-classroom instruction and recorded lessons guided by a standards-based curriculum. Students will log in to live whole group instructions throughout the morning and receive small group instruction in the afternoon.
  - In order to meet individual student's academic needs in a developmentally appropriate manner we have developed the following schedule:
    - Each class will begin with a morning meeting check in with the teacher and the entire class. Student will log in for specific times of

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- live whole group instructions. The teacher will then host small group meetings for additional instructional time.
- During the time that students are not meeting with their teacher, they will continue to work on assignments and activities that were taught along with videos and other supplemental resources like IXL. The goal is to alleviate the parent from having to teach their child. That is what our dedicated teachers and staff are here for. Your child should be able to complete his/her work independently.
  - The classroom teacher will provide students/parents an outline of lessons and assignments for the upcoming week. Students will have a consistent schedule for the entire course of distance learning.
  - This plan mimics our on-campus classroom as teachers work with small groups while the other students are working independently on the concepts introduced/taught by the teacher. Teachers will use Google Classroom.

### 4<sup>th</sup> to 8<sup>th</sup> Grade

- ❖ Our fall program calls for full distance learning for all students in 4<sup>th</sup> to 8<sup>th</sup> grade. The National Board of Professional Teaching Standards Recommends 2-3 hours online each day for students in grades in middle school. Virtually administered distance learning standards-based instruction with the utilization of a single Learning Management System (LMS) platform, Google Classroom, and coordinating technology resources. Students will follow a modified version of a traditional school day schedule. Teachers will utilize a mix of virtual live in-classroom instruction and recorded lessons. Students will be expected to log in each day and adhere to expectations for virtual participation and behavior. An overview of the curriculum stipulates but is not limited to the following:
  - High academic rigor in core subjects
  - Differentiated standards based instruction
  - Return to standard grading policy
  - Access to resource services and support
- ❖ Students will follow a modified version of a traditional school day schedule.

*All students will receive religious instruction rooted in our Catholic faith on a consistent basis.*

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Regardless of instructional method, I recognize the social-emotional support children will need when they return to school is vital to their success. I know in-person learning means masks, spacing and screening procedures that will take a while for students to adjust and feel comfortable. Ultimately, we believe that live instruction and interaction with peers and teachers is particularly critical to students' mental health at this time. With smaller, grade-level cohorts and optimized distance learning we aim to mitigate the potential spread of the contagion by lowering the risk of transmission between individuals by minimizing crossover among children and adults within the building. We are prepared to re-evaluate our approach as we near the end of the 1<sup>st</sup> quarter. However, please keep in mind, the Governor, County Executive and Department of Health can unilaterally change recommendations at any point. There is always the possibility that we must return to a full distance learning model for all students at any given time. Using our collective experiences from this spring and gained insight teachers will refine their plans and be prepared to provide a rigorous at-home academic program. A virtual meeting will be scheduled for parents on **August 13, 2020**. A follow up email will be sent with the times and Zoom information.

Finally, as a team of educators, we learned a great deal as we moved from our traditional teaching practices to an online format. It was incredible to witness. I commend our teachers for their hard work, dedication, and professional integrity throughout the vicissitudes of the tumultuous spring semester. As we take our program to the next level of this new frontier it is our shared objective for students to continue to thrive and achieve academic excellence in a trusted school environment. Rest assured, we take this responsibility very seriously. There is no undercutting the massive amount of work ahead of us all. I am confident we will conquer it united in common interests. With a community minded approach I believe Philippians 4:13 when it says we can do all things through Christ who strengthens us. Together we will face this challenge with the help of his strength, grace, and ever present mercy. In the meantime, we are praying for a happy and healthy summer for you and your family as we look forward to welcoming you back to school in the fall.

Blessings,

Mrs. Fernandez

Principal  
Holy Redeemer School

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