



St. Thomas More School Reopening Plan 2020-2021

Introduction

As we prepare to return to school this fall, the health and safety of our staff and students is our top priority. Covid-19 has impacted the lives of the entire STM community. While we are excited to welcome students and staff back to the building, we understand that many members of our community may be cautious and fearful. The purpose of the following document is to outline the protocols and procedures put in place to ensure the safety of everyone in our school community.

School will look different, just as every other aspect of our lives has looked different since March. However, we are committed to still offering the best and safest possible school and work environment.

This is a fluid document. As Covid changes and the state and county response to Covid changes, how the Rockford Diocese and STM respond to those changes might alter this plan. STM will be in constant communication about any changes to the plan. This plan was created following the guidelines outlined in the Rockford Diocese Reopening Plan. If you have any questions, comments, or concerns, please do not hesitate to reach out to the school administration.

Cohort Model

STM will operate using the cohort model. In this model, students are grouped by homeroom (grade level). These groups are static, keeping the same group of students together throughout the entire day. Students in PreK through 4th grade will remain with the same teacher, and if applicable, with the same assistant throughout the day. Students in grades 5th - 8th will remain in the same classroom with departmentalized teachers coming to them. Tech, Music, and Spanish teachers will also push into homerooms. PE will be held outside, weather permitting, otherwise in the gym. Locker rooms will not be used therefore there are no gym uniforms this school year. Art classes will be held in Roberts Hall for more space to spread out as they create their masterpieces. There will be no library classes for the 2020-2021 school year.

The cohort strategy maintains a safe environment by eliminating interaction between cohorts. It also allows a single class to be quarantined in the event of an infection, allowing the rest of the school to continue in-person learning. Homeroom teachers and assistants are considered part of the students' cohort and will quarantine with the class. Even when using the cohort model, we are requiring that students socially distance as much as possible and wear masks.

E-Learning vs. In Person Learning

In response to parent surveys, STM will be offering a choice of full-time in-person learning or full-time eLearning. Families must commit to either in-person or eLearning for the first quarter by Monday, August 10th. A commitment form will be sent out by Friday. A commitment form will need to be completed for each quarter of the school year. A student eLearning may switch to in person learning at the end of a quarter. Because eLearning and in-person learning will be happening simultaneously, eLearning will not be identical to the eLearning STM offered this past spring. However, we are still committed to making eLearning as rigorous and engaging as in-person learning.

STM E-Learning (subject to change)

E-Learning at STM will consist of the following:

- Synchronous Instruction: Live, staff-taught instruction for some subjects
- Asynchronous Instruction: Content and assignments posted on online platform
- Office Hours: STM staff available for one-on-one support
- Online Communication: STM staff available to answer questions and offer support via email
- A remote learning teacher assigned to your child for during the school day
- Students must log on every day during school hours to be counted as present for attendance

Learning Platforms

STM will use two main platforms for communication and learning this fall. Grades PreK - Kindergarten will be using SchoolSpeak and Grades 1st - 8th will be using Google Classroom. We will also be using Google Meets as our main video conferencing tool. We will be sending out parent training videos and handouts on these programs later in August. Please stay tuned for that information. These platforms will be used for students in person learning as well as eLearning. They allow us to easily switch between the two when and if the need arises. Grades 1 – 8 will also all receive their own Chromebook this school year so that they do not need to share devices and to be able to use these platforms during the school day. Chromebooks will only go home for eLearning situations. Parents must also sign a release for them. More information to come on this.

Cleaning, Sanitization, and Safety Protocols

STM is committed to ensuring a safe and clean environment for our students and staff. The following cleaning and sanitizing will happen before school, after school, and during the day.

Before School and During the School Day:

- Before Care room cleaned and sanitized before students arrive.
- Bathrooms cleaned and sanitized regularly throughout the school day.
- Roberts Hall tables sanitized between cohorts.
- Drinking fountains cleaned and sanitized (for bottle filling only).
- Railings, handles, and doorknobs cleaned and sanitized regularly throughout the school day.
- Classroom materials, lab equipment, and shared devices will be cleaned and sanitized between users. (STM will make every effort to not share materials).
- Desks and tables will be cleaned and sanitized.
- Recess, playground, and PE equipment will be cleaned and sanitized between cohorts. Most recess equipment will be used one time a day and sanitized before the next day.

After School:

- All classrooms will be cleaned; all classroom surfaces will be cleaned and disinfected.
- The Gym and Roberts Hall will be cleaned and sanitized.
- All Bathrooms will be cleaned and disinfected.
- All offices and additional rooms will be cleaned and disinfected.
- Drinking fountains will be cleaned and disinfected (only used for water bottle filling).
- All surfaces throughout the building will be disinfected.
- Playground equipment will be disinfected.

Safety Protocols

Masks:

Every person in the building must always wear a mask. The only exception to this is when students or staff are eating or are outside and maintaining six feet of social distance. Students and staff may wear face shields only if they are also wearing a mask. Face shields alone are not permitted. Each student will be receiving a STM lanyard to wear during the school day from the school. Masks will be clipped to the students' lanyard when not being worn such as during recess, PE, snack, and lunch.

Families should provide masks for their children. We will have extra disposable masks on hand for emergencies but will not be able to provide masks to all students on a daily basis. Masks must cover the nose, mouth, and chin. Students may wear masks that are:

- Solid red
- Solid navy blue (not royal blue)

- Solid black
- Solid white
- An STM logo mask (purchased through the school)
- Uniform plaid (sold through Schoolbelles)
- Disposable

If students are wearing reusable masks, they must be cleaned daily. We suggest having three masks per child at home. If students are wearing disposable masks, they must have a new mask each day. Students may NOT wear gators or masks with logos (except the STM logo).

Social Distancing:

Even while wearing masks, students and staff must remain socially distant. Students must be at least three feet separated from one another, but in most cases will be six feet away from each other. If students are seated at tables, there will be fewer students at each table to ensure social distancing. Desks will be placed two to six feet apart. Extra furniture has been removed from classrooms to allow for more distancing.

Signage:

Developmentally appropriate signage will be displayed throughout the building reminding students of safety protocols. Tape and decals will appear in hallways, classrooms, and bathrooms ensuring students navigate the correct way.

Schedule:

The schedule was created to include bathroom breaks and transition times and routes, to ensure social distancing.

Hygiene:

Hand sanitizer will be available in every classroom, every office, in the gym, in Roberts Hall, and After Care spaces. Students will engage in handwashing multiple times a day. Students are asked to come to school in freshly washed clothing daily.

Classroom doors and windows will remain open to allow clean air flow. If it is an extremely hot day, the AC will remain on, doors will remain open, but windows may be shut.

Classroom set up:

All desks have been moved into rows that do not touch each other and all face forward in the same direction. Extra furniture has been removed from classrooms to allow for even more distancing between the desks. If tables are used, such as in Art class and preschool, students

will be sitting all on one side of the table, thus ensuring they are all facing the same direction, and only two on each side spread apart. We are working on getting air purifiers for each classroom and room in the building where the students will be in.

All grades will also be assigned a plot of land outside on the school grounds that they can use whenever they want to. They can do a lesson outside, read together, eat lunch or snack, or whatever else the teacher chooses. We are asking that every student brings a 6 ft beach blanket to keep at school to be used when outside. This way they can take off their masks and socially distance while enjoying the weather.

Illness Protocol

If your child, a member of your family, or a person that comes in close contact with your child on a regular basis tests positive for Covid-19, please inform the principal immediately by emailing Mrs. Keane at skeane@stmcentral.org or skeane@stmelgin.org or calling the school at (847) 742-3959.

Arrival

Preschool and kindergarten will enter at door #1 and grades 1 – 8 will enter at door #4 (doors that face Highland Ave.). Students will be dropped off on the driveway as in the past. There will not be any patrol to open car doors. School doors will be held open by patrol. Students are to enter the building beginning at 7:30 AM – 7:45 AM and walk directly to their classroom. Parents can NOT walk their child into the building. There will be staff members outside and in the halls to help direct the students.

1. When students get to their classroom door there will be a stop decal letting them know where to wait as their homeroom teacher checks them. Other students will wait on spaced out decals behind them. The teacher will take the temperature of each student prior to admission to the classroom. If a student's temperature is over 100.4 degrees Fahrenheit, the student will be sent home.
2. The teacher will conduct a symptom check of each student also. Every student will be asked: "Do you feel sick in any way? Do you have a cough or fever? Were you given any medicine this morning?" If the student answers yes to any of these questions, the student will be sent home.
4. The teacher will check that the student's mask follows guidelines and is put on properly. If the mask does not meet guidelines, the student will be given a mask at school and will be asked to come with a mask that meets guidelines the following day.
4. The student will then use the hand sanitizer on the wall as they enter the classroom.

If a student exhibits symptoms while at school:

1. If a student has a temperature above 100.4 degrees Fahrenheit or if the student exhibits Covid-19 Symptoms while at school, the following procedures will be followed:

a. The student will be immediately separated from others, but within a line of sight of an STM staff member. Staff members will ensure that they are sensitive to student emotions and will separate student from class in a way that will not draw attention or embarrass the student.

b. The student's parents will be immediately contacted so the student may be taken home.

c. Due to current conditions related to COVID-19, STM requests at least two emergency contacts that are NOT the parents. Parents will always be contacted first. The other two emergency contacts must all be local contacts. STM staff will attempt to call parents first. If no contact is made after 10 minutes, STM staff will continue calling emergency contacts until they are identified to pick up the student. If you need to update your emergency contacts or add anyone to your list, please call the school office or email Mrs. Goto at kgoto@stmcentral.org.

2. The student should see a doctor to assess symptoms and/or administer a COVID-19 test.

3. Parents are encouraged to follow the CDC "If You Are Sick" guidelines for caring for oneself and others. The guidelines are at: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/ifyou-are-sick/index.html>)

When can my student return to school?

1. If it is determined by a doctor or a test that your child DOES NOT have Covid, they may return to school after their symptoms subside, they have been fever free for 24 hours, and parents have provided a doctor's note confirming the negative Covid-19 diagnosis. Parents should provide the note to the principal.

2. If a student either tests positive for Covid-19 or a doctor provides a diagnosis of Covid-19, the student must isolate at home and not return to STM until the student meets the following criteria to discontinue home isolation:

a. 24 Hours with no fever and

b. No Covid-19 symptoms or a doctor's written permission to return to school and

c. 10 days since Covid-19 symptoms first appeared.

d. Parents must confirm each of the foregoing in a written note to the principal before sending their student back to school at STM.

3. If a student with symptoms is not tested or seen by a doctor, or is seen by a doctor but refuses a recommended Covid-19 test, the student must isolate and not return to STM until the student meets the CDC's criteria to discontinue home isolation, which currently includes:

a. 24 Hours with no fever and

b. No Covid-19 symptoms or doctor's written permission to return to school and

c. 10 days since Covid-19 symptoms first appeared.

d. Parents must confirm each of the foregoing in a written note to the principal before sending their student back to school at STM.

4. STM students will be allowed to participate in eLearning during time away from school.

What are the procedures for notification and quarantine regarding a confirmed case of Covid-19?

1. STM will communicate with all parents, faculty, and staff using a Covid exposure letter if there is a student or staff member who is isolating due to a potential or confirmed case of Covid-19. Individual student and staff member names will NEVER BE USED.

2. If one student or staff member in a Cohort is diagnosed with Covid-19, that individual will be required to quarantine until such time the individual meets the return requirements or the Cohort discontinues quarantine, whichever is later.

3. The entire Cohort will receive a cohort quarantine letter and will quarantine if any student or staff member in the Cohort is diagnosed with Covid-19. The Cohort will quarantine for 14 days or until Cohort members meet the return requirements.

4. Any of the students' siblings, parents or relatives that attend or work at STM in which the student has had close contact with will also quarantine for 14 days. If that family member or relative also tests positive, their class will quarantine. The student should continue to quarantine until it has been 14 days from their positive test result, and the student meets the return requirements.

5. STM will communicate with all parents, faculty, and staff if an individual and/or Cohort is required to quarantine.

6. A Cohort will shift to eLearning while in quarantine.

7. The entire classroom will be deep cleaned, disinfected, and the windows will remain open to increase airflow.

8. In addition, the principal will work with the superintendent to confirm when the entire cohort or parts of the cohort may return to learning in person.

Under what circumstances would the entire school be required to quarantine?

In cases of widespread illness, such as illness affecting multiple Cohorts, the entire school may need to quarantine. If that were to happen, STM would communicate the plans to STM parents, faculty, and staff as swiftly as possible and STM would shift to eLearning. Please be sure your cell phone carrier is filled in on your School Speak profile so that you receive emergency text messages. Please call the school office if it is not.

If a family member or close contact has a confirmed case of Covid-19 or if their doctor believed that they have Covid-19

1. If a family member of a student or other person in close contact with a student has either a confirmed case of Covid-19 or Covid-19 symptoms, the student should isolate at home for at least 14 days from the last exposure to the individual.

2. If the student has continuing contact with an individual who has either a confirmed case of Covid-19 or Covid-19 symptoms, the student should isolate at home for 14 days from the time when the individual has met the following criteria:

- a. 24 Hours with no fever and
- b. No Covid-19 Symptoms and
- c. 10 days since Covid-19 Symptoms first appeared.

3. STM students will be allowed to participate in the eLearning Program during time away from school.

Symptom Checklist and at Home Monitoring

We know that isolation and quarantine have been difficult on everyone. We expect our families to take personal responsibility for the common good as well as their own safety. **We rely on parents to keep children home when they are sick.** We know that sometimes it is hard to tell in the morning if a child is truly ill or just isn't interested in coming to school that day, but we ask that you use caution as well as your best judgement during this time. Children should not come to school if they are experiencing any of the following symptoms:

- Fever or chills
- Cough
- Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing
- Fatigue
- Muscle or body aches
- Headache
- New loss of taste or smell
- Sore throat
- Congestion or runny nose
- Nausea or vomiting
- Diarrhea

In addition, we ask that you seek advice from a medical professional. If a child comes to school ill, or answers that he or she had been feeling ill during the arrival check in, he or she will be sent home immediately.

Arrival and Dismissal Procedures

Arrival

1. August 19th is the first day of school for grades K - 8. It is a full day of school. August 21st is the first day of preschool for the 4-year-olds. 3-year-old preschool will start the following week.
2. Students can begin arriving at 7:30 AM. **PLEASE note this change in time from last year.**
3. Students in preschool and kindergarten will enter at door #1.
4. Students in grades 1 – 8 will enter at door #4 (doors that face Highland Ave.). Parents should remain in car.
5. Students will be dropped off on the driveway as in the past. There will not be any patrol to open car doors.
6. **Masks should be worn when students exit the car.**

7. School doors will be held open by patrol. Students are to enter the building beginning at 7:30 AM – 7:45 AM and walk directly to their classroom. Parents can NOT walk their child into the building. There will be staff members outside and in the halls to help direct the students.

8. When students get to their classroom door there will be a stop decal on the ground letting them know where to wait as their homeroom teacher checks them. Other students will wait on spaced out decals behind them.

9. The teacher will do the following:

a. Check each student's temperature using a touchless thermometer. Students with 100.4 or higher will be sent home.

b. Ask students the following questions (Any students who answers "yes" to any of these questions will be sent home):

1. Do you feel sick in any way?
2. Do you have a cough or fever?
3. Have you been given medicine this morning?

c. Check to ensure students' masks are on correctly.

d. The student will then use the hand sanitizer on the wall as they enter the classroom.

10. Students will enter their classroom and go directly to their seat, without stopping at their locker or cubby. Students will be able to go to cubbies or lockers following the procedures set up by their homeroom teacher after all morning checks have been completed.

11. Late Arrival: After 7:45 AM all students arriving late should enter at door #1. The student will be greeted by an STM staff member who will go through the above arrival procedures with those students.

12. Please make sure students have all materials they will need for the day. Parents will not be permitted to drop off any materials or lunch at any point in the day.

Dismissal

All students will dismiss from door #1. Preschool parents are asked to pull up to the doors. Grades K-8 will have a box along the fence line where they will stand and wait. Parents are to park on the other side of the cones as in the past. All students must wear their mask even though they are outside until they get in their car.

- 3-year-old preschool will dismiss at 11 AM.

- 4-year-old half-day preschool will dismiss at 11:30 AM.
- 4-year-old full day preschool will dismiss at 2:30 PM.
- Kindergarten will dismiss at 2:35 PM.
- Grades 1 - 8 will begin dismissing at 2:40 PM beginning with 8th grade staggering every 2 minutes for the next grade.

Early Dismissal

Parents must email the school office and the homeroom teacher to arrange for early pick up. Email must state date, time, student name, grade/classroom and reason for early pick-up. Staff will reply to each email and confirm pick-up. Parent is to call the school office when they arrive. Office staff will then send for student and call the parent when they are at the doors. Parent can then enter and sign the student out at a table right by the main doors. Parent must be wearing a mask.

This would be the same protocol for picking up a student due to illness. Parents and other adults will not be able to wait in the school building. We are trying to keep the school to only staff and students in order to minimize exposures.

Uniforms

- PE uniforms will not be required this year as locker rooms are unable to be used at this time.
- In an effort to remain as healthy as possible, we ask that students arrive in a freshly washed uniform each day.

Lunch and Recess

Lunch will occur in the classroom for at least the first semester. There will be no hot lunch offered while eating in the classroom. Students must bring a lunch from home. Milk will still be provided for students who order it. It will be delivered by a Specials teacher to the classroom. Students will either wash their hands or be given hand sanitizer before eating and will remove masks to eat. Masks will be kept on their individual lanyard around their neck. Students may not get up unless it is an emergency situation, which will be facilitated by their teacher supervising lunch. Desks and tables in classrooms will be fully sanitized before and after lunch. Classes may also opt to each lunch outside.

Recess will be held outside on the plot of land that is marked off for each class. If it is inclement weather than it will be held in the classroom. Students will receive hand sanitizer or wash their hands before recess. Cohorts will have recess with their cohort only. Any shared equipment and playground equipment will be fully cleaned and sanitized between cohorts. STM will do

everything we can to not share recess material each day. All supplies will also be sanitized at the end of each day. Students can remove their masks for recess if they remain socially distant. No vigorous activity will be done while students are wearing masks. Students will wash their hands or receive hand sanitizer after recess.

Outside Snacks, Drinks and Birthday treats

Snacks will be brought in by students on an individual basis. Birthday and shared treats will not be permitted at this time.

Students are encouraged to bring a water bottle to school with them. Students will not be able to use traditional water fountains throughout the day. They will only be able to use the water fountains to fill up their water bottles. Water fountains will be cleaned and disinfected multiple times each day. Students should wash their hands or use hand sanitizer after using the water fountain. Students may take off their masks to take sips of water but must quickly put them back on. Students do not need to be 6 feet apart if only removing their mask for seconds to take a drink of water. If a student's mask gets wet, they must immediately change their mask. Water bottles must be kept closed when not in use.

Travel

Students and staff should remain at home for at least two weeks after traveling to another country or to states experiencing significant Covid-19 outbreaks (as determined by the CDC or by the guidance of the Governor of Illinois). If a parent or family member works out of state and has regular contact with a student, please reach out to the principal.

Before and After Care Program

Before Care:

Before Care Hours:

Before care begins at 6:30AM every day. To enter you need to use door #2 off the school driveway. There is a doorbell there; please ring for entry.

Arrival at Before Care:

Students will be greeted by an STM Before Care supervisor when they arrive. Students must wear a mask when they enter the building and during their time in Before Care. The staff member will take the student's temperature, ask the symptom checklist questions, have students use hand sanitizer, and then proceed to one of the tables in Roberts Hall. Students will be supervised there until 7:30 AM. At 7:30 students will be escorted by the staff member to their classroom door to wait for admittance by their teacher.

After Care:

Arrival to After Care:

Students in PreK-4 and Kindergarten will be walked to After Care by the classroom aide. Students in grades 1st through 8th grade will be dropped off at the After Care room (Roberts Hall) at the end of each school day as the class walks by at dismissal time. Students will be greeted by STM After Care staff upon arrival. Students must have their masks on and remain socially distant as they travel from their classroom to After Care.

Cohort Groups in After Care:

Children will be kept in the same cohorts (grade level) as best as possible. Students will be in small group cohorts at different tables in Roberts Hall. They will be with the same supervisors throughout their time in After Care.

Snack Time:

Students will still be given a small snack and glass of water each day as before. Snacks will be individually packaged items. If you wish, you can send your child with food/snack from home and they will be allowed to eat what they brought. There will be no sharing of food.

Time in After Care:

Students will be outside for some of the time weather permitting while social distancing. For example, we may have two or three small groups outside playing in their area by cohorts so that they can socially distance, then we will rotate inside to give the other groups outside time. It will be difficult at times to have all After Care students outside at the same time. We will do our best to split/share time inside and outside. When students are inside, they will be able to color/draw, play with a toy of their own that they brought from home, play with a toy at After Care that has been sanitized (toys cannot be shared), or read a book. Students with homework should/can use this time to complete their homework for the day.

Pick Up:

Pick up for your child will be a little different this year as we are not allowing parents inside the building. We ask that you ring the doorbell at door #2. You will then be greeted at the door by an STM staff member. Please state your child(ren)'s name(s) and sign them out at the table right by the door; please do not pass the table. Once you have signed please turn and wait outside the door for your child. We ask that you socially distance outside from other parents if there is a group picking up at the same time. We also ask that you wear a mask at pick up. This procedure may take a little time as we will need to let your child know it is time to go home.

Your child will be asked to clean up their space, get their belongings, etc. We ask for your patience during this time.

Wearing of masks/bathroom use:

Students must wear their masks at all times in After Care except for when they are eating snack or when outside and social distancing. Students will be able to use the bathrooms when necessary but limited to only two students at a time. Students will be instructed to wash hands often and hand sanitizers will be available for their use as well.

AFTER CARE PHONE NUMBER: 847-742-3959 ext. 119

If you intend on using After Care or Before Care (Extended Care), please register as soon as possible. The form is on our school website under the Admissions tab.

Extracurriculars

After School Enrichment Classes:

There will be no in person enrichment courses as of right now. There will be no in person after school instruction at STM during the 2020-2021 school year. Any outside vendors will supply a flyer describing the class, pricing, etc. Outside vendors will adhere to the policies and procedures STM has in place.

Athletics

At this time there will be no athletics offered at STM for the first quarter. This will be reviewed by the Rockford Diocese and the Deanery principals every quarter. Some sports that were to be played in the Fall may be moved to the Spring.

If a sport will be played later the Athletic Director will work to arrange appropriate sport activities that will abide by all health and safety regulations provided by our governing bodies: Illinois State Board of Education, Illinois Department of Public Health, and Illinois Elementary School Association, as well as the Rockford Diocese.

Band

Our band program will no longer be offered during our regular school day in person. Band will be held virtually and offered as an after-school program. More information regarding band will be distributed later to students in grades 4 - 8.

Programming

1. STM will not be having the Christmas program for the 2020-2021 school year.

2. Other programs and events such as Back to School Night, Parent-Teacher conferences, Fall Fest, and more will be held virtually or canceled. Information on each will be sent as they approach.

Catholic Identity and School Mass

Classes will attend Mass on Tuesday, Wednesday, or Thursday morning. Three classes will attend each morning so that all students attend Mass once a school week. Only grades K - 8 will attend. A schedule of which grade attends on which day will be distributed later. There will not be an all school Mass for the 2020-2021 school year at this time.

Front Office

Access to the school office will be extremely limited. Visitors will be prohibited during the school day to the greatest extent possible. The main office is open from 7:30 AM to 3:30 PM. No entry into the building is allowed before or after that time unless office staff is present. A reception table has been installed in the main hall by door #1 for use by the school office staff. All parents and visitors need to stop at the reception desk for all school business; they may not walk past the table to go to the school office. Parents are also not allowed to enter the school building with their child before or after school. This is to help to keep all staff and students safe and healthy.

Visitor Protocol

Visitors are asked to email Kim Goto at kgoto@stmcentral.org to schedule an appointment to visit the school office. Visitors that need to enter the school building must adhere to the following or entrance to building will be denied:

1. Ring the doorbell located at door #1. School office staff will be able to identify the visitor and determine if their visit is essential.
2. Visitors will proceed to the reception table located just inside of door #1 to properly sign in/out. Visitors will enter the following information: name, date, company name (if applicable), time in/out, and the reason for the visit.
3. A mask MUST be worn.
4. Temperature check will be conducted.
5. Symptom check will be asked.
6. Hand sanitizer must be used.

7. Wear a visitor badge while in the building.
8. Maintain proper distance following traffic flow marking and floor decals.

Staff and Administration Meetings

Meetings with staff and/or administration should be by appointment and virtual if possible. Please reach out to the staff member you wish to meet with via email to schedule the appointment. If the meeting must be in person, visitors will be subject to the procedures listed in the Visitor Protocol section. In the event that a parent must meet with a staff member or administrator on an urgent basis, please call the front office.

Volunteering at STM

Volunteers are vital to the success of many of the programs at STM. In order to maintain a safe, healthy environment, and reduce risk of COVID-19 exposure, STM will limit the number of in person volunteers and opportunities. Volunteer opportunities may still be available virtually. Please complete your Safe Environment documents to be ready to volunteer if you have not already. Please contact Mrs. Goto in the school office or check the school website for more information on these requirements.

Large Gatherings and Fundraisers

Large in-person gatherings are canceled until we receive notice from the Rockford Diocese. Most fundraisers or events will be held virtually. We are determining if some fundraisers, such as the Walk-a-thon, can be held in person, socially distanced, and staggered.

Accommodation for Preschool Students

We at STM recognize that in any circumstance, the decision of choosing a preschool program for your child is significant. In past years, many families have chosen STM as an extension of their home and we have been privileged to share these precious years with our students and their families. These decisions have been based on the foundations of our program. We strive to provide a well-rounded, play based approach that focuses on relationships, social emotional learning and nurturing the whole child.

As we open for the 2020-21 school year, we expect to welcome students to in person learning. We all know that things will look different in our classrooms this year, but we want you to know that our school mission and the foundations of our program will remain our guiding force. We expect our students to engage in play, explore their learning environment, socialize with classmates and build trusting relationships with teachers. While our preschool teaching team will be working on different student expectations than in the past, please know that

encouraging young children to try new things is our area of expertise. Creating attainable goals and moving one step at a time, it will be our job to help children experience the benefits of following the guidelines.

How we will support safe in-person learning:

- Virtual introductions so that your child knows what their teacher looks like and sounds like with and without a mask.
- Videos demonstrating procedures and routines.
- Masks will be worn by all members of the preschool cohort -- we are looking into having an area of the classroom where a child may take a short break from the mask without putting the cohort at risk
- We expect to have learning centers where children can use classroom materials. We will begin with attainable goals such as rotating to table centers (with plexiglass dividers) with teacher support and hand sanitizing in between.
- As we see that children are mastering the safety guidelines, we will open up more centers; giving our students the opportunity to make more choices which is a best practice in early childhood classrooms.
- Each child will have some materials that are for their use only such as crayons, markers, and glue sticks.
- Masks can be removed for snack, lunch and outdoor play. Physical distance must be kept during times when masks are removed. Preschool class will be using the gated courtyard as their outdoor space.

Parents

- Routines are very important for young children. Creating new routines or re-establishing usual routines can help children feel safe. Keeping regular mealtimes and bedtimes, setting a daily time to play games together, read to them, or sing songs together all help.
- Support from parents or caregivers is very important during periods of stress. Parents may be physically present but not available emotionally because they are so stressed themselves. It is important to make time to reassure young children and spend time with them.
- Explain why things are different. Young children may not understand why things have changed (like why they cannot go outside or play with other children) but talking with them will

help them to feel supported by you. Help the children in a way that is appropriate for their age. Keep explanations simple.

- Take care of yourself. This is very important. Even young children can recognize stress and worry in adults in the house.

Please know we are doing everything we can in the school building to make sure that students and staff remain safe and healthy. We ask that you in turn practice safe actions and follow similar protocols when not in school to further ensure students and staff safety.

Thank you for all your support!