



ASSUMPTION
SCHOOL

**Assumption School Millbury
Re-opening Plan for School
Year 2020-2021**



DIOCESE OF WORCESTER CATHOLIC SCHOOLS OFFICE

49 ELM STREET
WORCESTER, MASSACHUSETTS 01609

August 10, 2020

Dear parents and guardians,

With the start of the school year soon approaching, Catholic schools in the Diocese of Worcester have been working fervently to develop plans for reopening.

Across the Diocese, Catholic school leaders have spent the summer months carefully reviewing Massachusetts Department of Education (DESE) COVID guidance in safeguarding the well-being of students and staff alike this 2020-2021 academic year. The DESE guidance is based upon statewide data as gathered by the Massachusetts Department of Public Health (DPH), the Governor's Office, national public health agencies such as Centers for Disease Control (CDC), and the Massachusetts chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics. This guidance has made for a trusted source of information on procedures and practices in mitigating the spread of COVID-19, and safely operating schools within the Commonwealth at this phase of the pandemic.

Earlier this summer, each Catholic school leader in the Diocese was given the responsibility of developing various alternatives for reopening this fall. From the start, the health and safety of students and staff has been paramount. Informed by the American Academy of Pediatrics which advocates for an in-person educational setting, our Catholic schools have worked towards this goal. Health experts and laypersons mutually agree on the holistic benefits of in-person education. Still, we likewise understand that effective school community responses to COVID necessitate locally contextualized, data-informed, and adaptive educational approaches.

Today we release the latest version of school reopening plans for your review. The plan developed for your child's school intentionally includes different learning models that will allow for ease in transitioning to another mode of learning should local or regional COVID-19 concerns require doing so. Since no two schools are alike in all things, each school has conducted reviews of facilities, developed new protocols and procedures based on the DESE guidance for mitigating the risk of COVID transmission, and are actively coordinating professional development training and school education programs to make sure stakeholders understand the expectations around new health and safety requirements. As such, each reopening plan is tailored to the individual environments in which your children are educated. Please understand that plans may need to be amended as additional knowledge and guidance is received.

It is important that you understand fully the plan that will be implemented at your child's school. If you have questions, I encourage you to contact your child's principal. I would also be happy to answer any general questions that you may have. I may be reached via email at dperda@worcesterdiocese.org or by telephone at 774-764-1019.

All God's Blessings,

David Perda, Ph.D.
Superintendent of Schools

Letter from the Principal

Dear parents and staff,

This year has already proven to be one to put into the history books. An unprecedented closure of school last March with remote learning until the end of school was something that none of us would have ever predicted. Planning for this upcoming school year is proving to be just as challenging, as we are learning more about the virus and how to prevent the spread of the virus to keep our students and staff safe at school.

Assumption School plans to open in person on September 8th. This will be our first day of school for all classes. The importance of these plans is to guide us in preparing for this year. There will be changes along the way as our knowledge of this virus continues to grow. First and foremost, we will be following the guidelines set out by the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE), and the Center for Disease Control (CDC) for health and safety. Our goal is to keep our staff and students healthy while they are learning and teaching in our school.

The Catholic schools in the Diocese of Worcester have been working together over the past month to discuss in person instruction at our schools. We meet twice a week to consider all of the obstacles that we may encounter this upcoming school year. Dr. Perda has requested that each school follow the guidelines set out by DESE and submit the three plans to the Catholic Schools Office. Assumption School will submit an in-person plan, along with a hybrid and remote learning plan. Please note that with all things, there may be changes along the way due to new protocols set forth by DESE or the CDC. We will keep you updated as we go along with this process.

Assumption School's committee met four times to work on our plans for opening this fall. Our committee was comprised of Kymberlee Schillinger parent, Melissa McElreath Middle School teacher, Carol Zabinski Music teacher, Liz Matson Preschool teacher, Gayle Teixeira Assistant to the Principal, Suzanne Dwinell School Nurse, Father Mulcahy Pastor, and Julie Olson Principal.

This committee looked at all aspects of opening Assumption with all safety and health aspects in mind. We started at the beginning of the day and talked about everything in between until the end of day. While this is our immediate plan, we know that it is a living document that will change as needed throughout the school year and with any new developments in the virus. We will also send home a survey to gauge our family's needs for the upcoming school year. This data will help us set up classrooms and plan for the new year.

Assumption School, due to the new procedures and professional development that teachers will need, will begin school on September 8th. Tuesday, September 8th will be a half day with a noon dismissal. Each teacher will have a Zoom meeting with parents and students prior to the first day of school as a meet the teacher day. Our preschool students will have a time assigned

to them to meet the teacher on September 3rd and 4th and to see their classroom. This is put in place, so the students will feel more comfortable to coming in without their parents when school starts.

At this time, I would also encourage all parents, as I have our staff, to limit physical contact with those outside your immediate family group as we near the start of the school year. We have been extremely attentive to ensuring our facilities are ready to receive students and are aligned to guidelines. We do not have any control over behavior outside of our school; however, that behavior dramatically impacts the ability to keep our doors open. Please follow the guidelines outside of the school day to ensure that the in-person instruction day does not become disrupted. ~~What happens outside of school directly impacts what happens inside of school.~~ Protecting your family and other Assumption families will depend upon the commitment of each and every one of us to follow the best practices in fighting COVID-19. We are all in this together to remain safe and healthy. Please remember that keeping your child home with that bad cold will help keep our kids in school for a longer period of time- as always err on the side of caution.

Assumption School will continue to provide the excellent education that has been in place since 1925, but with the new health and safety practices in place the school day may look a little bit different. Please know that your child will continue to receive a faith-filled education whether we are in school or remote. To accomplish this goal, we will need your patience and prayers.

Blessings on a safe and healthy school year,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Mrs. Julie Olson". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Mrs. Julie Olson

Principal

In-Person Learning Model

Assumption School will return to school on Tuesday, September 8, 2020 to in person learning full time, five days a week for a full school day (8:30-3:00). Our classrooms will be arranged to make room for the 3-6 feet of social distancing that is required for the health and safety of the students and staff. Our classrooms are capped at fifteen students, Kindergarten-eighth grade, so that we are able to distance the students adequately. We will designate teacher and student areas with tape. This will ensure that there is separation for the two groups within the classroom. We have access to other areas in the building to utilize on an as needed basis. Each teacher will be responsible for arranging their classroom, within the given recommendations, and they may be removing any extra furniture that will not be needed at this time. Teachers are also asked to eliminate any hard to clean or soft objects from their classrooms. Teachers will also need to have plan to clean any items in their classrooms.

Every student, with their parent's help, and staff member will need to monitor themselves **daily** for any COVID symptoms. <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/downloads/community/schools-childcare/Daily-Home-Screening-for-Students-Checklist-ACTIVE-rev5A.pdf>. This check should be done before you leave for school. We ask that if you have any of these symptoms that you stay home. Please think about the health and safety of not only your child's class, but the greater good of the school and its staff. The symptoms are:

- Fever (100.4°F or higher) or chills
- Cough
- Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing
- New loss of taste or smell
- Sore throat
- Headache when in combination with other symptoms
- Muscle aches or body aches
- Nausea, vomiting, or diarrhea
- Fatigue-when in combination with other symptoms
- Nasal congestion or runny nose (not due to other known causes, such as allergies) when in combination with other symptoms

If staff or students have any of the above symptoms, they must get a test for an active COVID-19 infection prior to returning to school. (see link for procedures for possible COVID -19 scenarios above) <https://mailchi.mp/doe.mass.edu/commissioners-weekly-update-7-20-20-cvrf-grant-covid-19-protocolstwo-step-process-for-fall-reopening-plans?e=e54ceaa84bv>

Assumption School has a nurse's office along with an adjacent room in which a child with symptoms of COVID-19 is able to quarantine until they are picked up by their parent. (See

above link). Assumption School has adequate numbers of PPE (N95 masks, face shield, and gowns) for a situation like the above.

Lunch will be held in the students' classrooms. This is the best way to continue social distancing while not wearing a mask. Students will need to bring all utensils that are needed for their lunch. We do not have a hot lunch program, but we have milk that students may purchase. Milk will be passed out by a staff member. If a student needs help opening the milk, the teacher will wear gloves to open the milk. Each milk carton will come with a wrapped straw.

Cohorts or pods will be used to keep our students and staff with the same people throughout the day. Our Preschool through third grade are self-contained classrooms. Some of these classes will be combined for recesses and mask breaks throughout the day. The pod will be based on the number of students in each class, which will be determined closer to the start of school.

In fourth through eighth grade our classes are departmentalized, and our teachers will move from class to class to minimize the spread of germs throughout the day. Our foreign language teacher will travel from class to class. Physical Education will be held outside (when weather permits), otherwise inside following the DESE guidelines of mask wearing, and equipment use. Music and art will be held in their classrooms and cleaned at the end of each period. Each student in our Art classes will have their own supplies. Our students will stay within their cohorts throughout the day, even when travelling with a safe distance, to minimize the risk of potential infection. Our teachers are encouraged to take students outside for class when weather permits.

Hand sanitizer will be placed in each classroom, hallways, bathrooms, each entrance to the school, and offices for use throughout the day. Handwashing will be important for all staff and students to perform during the course of the day. Masks will be worn by all in public areas and all the time in grades 2-8. We **strongly encourage** the wearing of masks in Preschool, Kindergarten and first grade. There will be mask breaks during the day. Each family will provide their child with their own masks and are responsible for the cleaning of them each night at home. If a mask is left at home, the school will provide the student with a disposable mask. Our nurse will provide instruction for proper mask-wearing and care to our staff and students.

Our classrooms will have windows open for ventilation throughout the day. Box fans may be used to pull air out of the classrooms. We are looking into air purifiers for each classroom.

Morning drop off will have a clear procedure to ensure that students continue to maintain social distancing. In the morning, our students will be in a carline, they will walk in as a student family, and the students will hand sanitize on their way into school. We are asking that the students have their hands free (everything in their backpack) so they are able to properly use hand sanitizer and proceed directly to their classrooms. Lockers/cubbies will only be used for their coats.

Afternoon Pick up will have a clear procedure to ensure that students continue to maintain social distancing. Our Preschool and Kindergarten students without siblings will be dismissed at 2:45 to a parent at the side door. Our next wave of dismissal will be the rest of our students. The older students will pick up their siblings from Preschool and Kindergarten on the way out. They will be dismissed at 2:55 by family out the side door to their cars. This method will reduce the number of students in the hallways at once.

Our teachers and staff will be creating videos about new protocols such as morning and afternoon carline, what our staff members look like in masks, do's and don'ts, and how the school has changed over the summer. Each teacher will also create a video introducing themselves and showing them around the classroom.

If a student is absent, we will send homework via email for the student to complete.

If families opt to have their child remote learn due to a health condition, we will have a live feed **or** short videos presenting the lessons for the students. See remote learning for more information.

We encourage our families to talk with their Primary Care Physician if they have a concern with their child coming to school for in person learning.

Hybrid Learning Model

A hybrid learning model alternates between an in-person model and a remote model. This model would be used only if the state or Diocese of Worcester were to mandate it.

A schedule would be set forth as such: The school would place students in two cohorts taking into consideration families with multiple students in the building. We would then assign in person learning on Monday and Thursday for Cohort 1 and Tuesday and Friday for Cohort 2 with a deep clean and a remote learning morning on Wednesday.

On Wednesday, when all students are at home, our teachers would utilize Zoom to engage and teach lessons to their classes during the morning. A schedule would be put in place for the teachers so that families with multiple children are able to supply the needed technology for their students. Teachers would also have office hours in the afternoon if any students were to need help on an assignment. Students' attendance will be taken on Wednesday.

Remote Learning Model

Remote learning would be put in place if the state mandates the closure of schools or if a grade/class were required to quarantine out of school for an extended period of time.

If you choose to remote learn due to comfort level or health conditions you are making a commitment for the first quarter and will be able to reevaluate at the beginning of second quarter.

Should either of these cases happen we would enact our remote learning plan as we did in the spring. Our teachers utilized our website and used a password protected page to place assignments and any needed resources. Zoom was the platform that Assumption School used to meet with the students and teach their lessons as we moved on in our studies during our spring remote learning. We are exploring the use of Microsoft Teams (*Microsoft Teams is the ultimate tool for collaborating at work. Teams provides a fully decked out document storage, chat, and online meeting environment. Teams is Microsoft's answer to programs like Slack or Google Hangouts. If you've ever needed to participate in a team project at work, you'll fully appreciate the need for such a tool. Each program is designed for work collaboration and has a slightly different set of features, some you may need, some you may not. Microsoft Teams is your new best friend for group projects.*) for a new platform for grades 4-8. During remote learning, we will utilize the drop off and pick up model as we did in the spring. This proved to be helpful for those parents with questions or concerns. If parents did not want to participate in the drop off and pick up model, everything was online for the students to download or print.

Our teachers will be trained on any platform that we use for our remote learning. Our beginning of the year meetings will focus on this. Assumption School is actively reviewing Microsoft Teams, Seesaw, and possibly Google Classroom.

During remote learning students/parents/teachers will:

Report to their class meeting on time as attendance will be taken. If a student is absent the parents must email the teacher and secretary to let the school know their child will not be present that day.

Students are responsible for any work that their teachers assign that day. The teacher will give a due date and clear instructions. If the student needs clarification, they will need to email the teacher with their questions.

All student work will be graded with feedback. Grades will be posted on Edge for grades 4-8 weekly. Any assignments can be turned in via email (scan or picture) unless your teacher requests a different way. Teachers will be sure to contact parents and students when any assignments are missing. The students will need to complete the work within the time limit set by the teacher.

Teachers will set aside time each day for open office hours. This can be done by having an open meeting on Zoom or Microsoft Teams where students can join as needed.

Students will need to be cognizant of their schedule and report to class on time. The schedule for remote learning will not change.

Out of School Time Plan

Assumption School will offer before and after school care on days that students are present at school. We are asking our parents to only use Extended Day if the parents are working.

Students will continue in their pods and will make use of any outdoor space when weather permits. We will use the classrooms (where pods were already present), the church hall and any other area that may be needed. Pick up will be different, as parents will not be allowed in the building.

Any extracurriculars (Chess, Scrabble, Drama, sports, sign language, Band, Chorus) will be added in as it is safe to do so.

Student Supports and Professional Learning

Our students, whether we are in school, hybrid or remote, will be monitored by our staff. We will be sure to contact parents or our school nurse with any concerns. We will be looking for any social emotional stress, pulling away from the group, or anxiety. As a staff we will address the concerns with the students and their parents.

Certification of health and safety requirements

Assumption will certify that they meet the final health and safety requirements issued by DESE.

Assumption School's nurse, Suzanne Dwinell, will provide our staff with training for properly wearing and caring for masks and show them how to teach the kids. Suzanne will also make a trip to classrooms on the first day of school to show the students how to wear and care for a mask, the importance of wearing a mask, and how it protects us.