

Good afternoon, St. Mary families and students,

I am writing to let you know our school plan for **Monday, September 14th** due to dangerously high (hazardous) air quality levels in our region. Once again we face a dilemma with no easy answer. I visited the school this afternoon to check on the air quality in the classrooms, offices, and main hall. The prognosis is not good. One of the ways we cool our main hall is by pumping air into the space. This air is not filtered, so the main hall is quite hazy at this time. Several of our classrooms are also smokey and/or smell that way too. Proper ventilation, something we need to ensure due to COVID guidelines, cannot be provided safely with the air quality in this hazardous range.

To further complicate this issue is the fact that some of our students will be returning to school with the mask requirement in place. Without an outdoor recess or PE option, or even a hallway to use to offer students a reprieve from wearing masks, it will be difficult to provide mask breaks to our students on site during the course of the day.

Social distancing is a challenge if we keep students inside as well, limiting their chance for movement and exercise--something they'll need more desperately than ever--especially on the first day of school under these new COVID protocols. Also, while we have worked hard to develop a safe, staggered arrival and dismissal, and a more efficient way to screen children as they enter the building through the MyMedBot application, the process of dropping and picking up students is simply not as fast as it has been, exposing our children to the hazardous air quality in the morning and afternoon. Furthermore, air quality guidelines currently require people to try and stay inside their homes and limit their movement and activities. Finally, even with the new live-stream technology, direct instruction can only take place from the classroom, requiring teachers to navigate the same polluted spaces in our building.

In light of all these factors, and because I want to make sure our first day of school for ALL our students learning remotely or in-person goes very well, I am postponing the start of the school (in-person or remotely) until Tuesday, September 15th.

We will treat this as we do a snow day. So, all classes (Pre-K 3--4, TK, and K-2) will not have school on site Monday. Our Educare services are cancelled and will not start until Tuesday either. And ALL classes/teachers will wait to launch their live-stream and remote learning platform for students until Tuesday. An IRIS Alert will be sent out this evening and/or tomorrow morning about our school closure tomorrow.

I know this isn't ideal. I apologize for the inconvenience this change will likely cause your family.

One more day! Let us pray for peace for the rest of the year 2020.

Blessings, Ben Walker

<https://spokanecleanair.org/current-air-quality>

