

St. Mary Catholic School 2020-2021 Reopening FAQ

Will all students be able to return to the school building in the fall?

Yes, provided there is no mandate from state or local health officials to close school buildings. St. Mary believes that we learn better together, and the school has made plans to accommodate all students in grades preschool through Grade 8 in the school building every day of the week while offering a livestream remote learning experience for our students simultaneously.

Will Educare be open?

Yes. The school is planning to continue offering Educare after school. Morning Educare will not be offered for the 20-21 school year.

Will students need to be screened to enter the building?

Yes. Each day families will be asked to screen their children and attest to their health. All students and employees will have their temperature taken at school with a no-contact thermometer before being allowed to enter the building. Screening procedures will be communicated in future messages.

Will students be spaced apart to lower the risk of transmission?

Yes. Students will be seated six feet apart in their classrooms. Some grades may need to move to a different classroom for the 2020-2021 school year in order to fit in the space with the required six-foot distance. Decisions about classroom locations will be communicated later this summer.

Will the school have to limit gatherings of large groups?

Yes. School-wide assemblies like our Monday Morning Assembly will be suspended until it is once again safe to gather in large groups. School-wide prayer and Morning Assembly will take place via livestream and the intercom.

Will students be able to attend Mass?

Yes. In accordance with the latest diocesan guidelines, the entire school body cannot attend Mass together, but Fr. Lewis will celebrate two school Masses per week. Current plans are that 5-8 students will attend Mass on Tuesday mornings and K-4 students will attend Mass on Thursday mornings at 8:30 am.

Will movement be limited throughout the school building?

Yes. Students will for the most part remain in the same space throughout the day. Junior high teachers will move from room to room to teach their classes. Students will have PE outside, weather permitting, and they will have recess (although recess activities will be limited, and playground space will be designated for specific groups at specific times). PE will be moved into the north side of the gym when the weather turns.

Will hot lunch be available?

No. To reduce the risk of transmission, the hot lunch program will be suspended for the 2020-2021 school year.

Will K-6 students have Music?

Yes. Students in grades K-6 will have music instruction in their classrooms. However, music instruction will consist of using musical instruments or learning music history and theory. Singing will not be able to take place while the risk of transmission is still high.

Will 5-8 students have Band?

No. The band program will be suspended for the 2020-2021 school year, to resume again in 2021-2022. The logistical challenges of providing enough space for a safe band experience make band class impractical at this point.

Will K-8 students have to wear face coverings?

Yes. Students in grades Kindergarten through Grade 8 will be required to wear a cloth face covering or a clear face shield. Face coverings can be removed for eating lunch and going out to recess. Cloth face coverings are preferred to face shields because they work more effectively to prevent the transmission of COVID-19. Face shields do not offer the same protection as cloth masks and therefore the wearing of face shields may cause longer quarantine times in the event of an active case of COVID-19. If used, face shields should extend below the chin, to the ears, and have no gap at the forehead.

According to state guidelines, cloth face coverings should not be worn by:

- Children younger than age 2 years.
- Those with a disability that prevents them from comfortably wearing or removing a face covering.
- Those with certain respiratory conditions or trouble breathing.
- Those who are deaf or hard of hearing and use facial and mouth movements as part of communication.

- Those advised by a medical, legal, or behavioral health professional that wearing a face covering may pose a risk to that person.

Students who fall into any of the above categories will be able to wear face shields.

Will preschool students have to wear face coverings?

No. Preschool teachers are required to wear face coverings, but preschool students will not be required to wear them.

Will the school have face coverings available if needed?

Yes. The school will have a supply of disposable masks, non-disposable masks, and face shields. Students are encouraged to bring their own face coverings from home. The more comfortable they are with a face covering, the more likely they are to keep it on. We encourage families to help children find face coverings that are comfortable, colorful, and creative. The school will happily accept donations of child-sized cloth masks and/or disposable face masks.

Will teachers wear face coverings?

Yes. Teachers will wear cloth masks during the day. For certain lessons a teacher may temporarily switch to a face shield if the lesson requires students to see the teacher's face.

If someone at the school tests positive for COVID-19, will the whole school have to close down?

Not necessarily. The school will be instructed by the health district regarding how to best respond, and there are many variables that will affect their recommendations. One thing is certain: the more that students wear cloth face masks rather than face shields, the less likely they will be to have to quarantine, even if someone at school tests positive for COVID-19.

If my child is healthy but has to quarantine because of contact with others, will he or she be able to continue learning?

Yes. The school will implement our simultaneous remote learning option for any student that has to remain at home for an extended period.

If I do not feel comfortable sending my child to school for face-to-face learning in the fall, will he or she be able to attend classes?

Yes. The school will implement the simultaneous remote learning option for families that do not feel comfortable sending their children to school.

What will happen if state or local health officials close school again?

We are hopeful that a full closure will not happen. It may be the case that instead of a full closure, some students will be able to come to school and some will not. If that is the case, then we will prioritize face-to-face instruction for students in grades preschool through 4 and implement a remote live-streamed learning model for students in grades 5-8. We are in the process of purchasing enough Chromebooks to go fully one-to-one for every student in the school. In the event of a full or partial closure, students will be able to take their Chromebooks home to use for learning. If you would like to help us fund the one-to-one Chromebook initiative, please contact Ben Walker, Brian Hull, or Lou Turner.

What if state or local health officials mandate a full closure of school buildings?

If a full closure happens again, we will be ready to implement our remote learning model (via livestream) for all students in grades K-8. The preschool will continue to operate in the event of a K-8 closure, and the school is making preparations to provide childcare for essential workers.

If there is a full closure, will the remote learning model be different than it was in the spring?

Yes. The spring closure was an emergency response, and while we received much positive feedback, we know that it was only a temporary solution to a short-term situation. Remote learning this fall, if needed, will include live and video instruction from St. Mary teachers, an easier sign-on process, more assessment feedback, and higher expectations for student participation and engagement.

Will the school year have to be extended if a stay-at-home order is in place?

No. As long as students are actively participating in the school's remote learning environment, they are fulfilling attendance requirements. Whether students are engaged in face-to-face instruction or our remote learning model, school attendance policies are still in effect: "It is expected that each student will attend school at scheduled times, except for illness or family emergency."

What other sanitizing measures will be in place?

The school has implemented increased sanitizing of the building both during the day and after school. Staff will wipe down desks, door handles, light switches, and other "high-touch" surfaces regularly throughout the school day. Handwashing stations will be brought into the school, and hand sanitizing stations will be set up around the classrooms and throughout the school.

What can we do to prepare for the new school year?

First, speak positively about the situation, regardless of how frustrating it may be. Children can pick up parents' frustrations and take them on even if they don't understand the source. The calmer and more positive you are, the less stressful it will be for the children when they return to school. Look for the grace in the moment and share it with your family.

Second, follow state guidelines for preventing the transmission of the virus. Wear masks in public and limit the size of gatherings. Our children and our community cannot flourish if the virus does. Have your children practice wearing a mask so that when they come to school, they are not distracted by the novelty of having to wear one.

Finally, if you are able, donate to the St. Mary COVID-19 Pandemic Relief Fund. Please contact our Advancement Director, Lou Turner if you would like to make a contribution. The school is experiencing a dramatic increase in expenses in order to create a safe and effective learning environment for the children. St. Mary is purchasing masks, face shields, contactless thermometers, hand sanitizer, Chromebooks, and subscriptions to various online learning resources. The technological scaffolding to offer a livestream educational experience is upwards of \$ 40,000 in an effort to enhance the online learning experience for our children. The additional cleaning and sanitization expenses exceed \$25,000.