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BEGINNING OUR 2020-21 SCHOOL YEAR: WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

Our plan and procedures are subject to change based on the needs and circumstances of the community and information from educational, health, and government agencies, including the Archdiocese of St. Louis, the St. Louis City Department of Health, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the American Academy of Pediatrics, and the School Partnership Program through Cardinal Glennon Children's Hospital.

Please find the most up-to-date information on our website (www.saintstephenstl.org/school).

St. Stephen Back-to-School Task Force

(all are SSP employees, parishioners, and/or school parents)

Father Ron Hopmeir, SSP pastor
D. Greg Sturgill, SSP principal
Cindy Asinger, St. Louis Archdiocese Office of Catholic Education & Formation
Dr. Anne Borgmeyer, nurse-practitioner, SSP music teacher
Meghan Cotner, architect
Dustin Cutts, SSP 8th grade teacher
Megan Finney, child life specialist, Cardinal Glennon Hospital
Catherine Grindel, Lutheran Senior Services

Patrick Holley, principal, Sacred Heart (Valley Park) Catholic School
Dr. Celeste Morley, pediatric infectious disease subspecialist, Washington University
Colleen Nigro, architect
Amanda Quinn, SSP School administrative assistant
Bob Wiley, SSP facilities manager
Stephanie Wobbe, SSP communications coordinator
Rosalie Yezbick, instructor, American Public University System

This plan is not intended to be a comprehensive guide addressing every detail. We will provide such a fully revised handbook to you before the start of school. At this time, our task force is working diligently to address the circumstances specific to our school. One of those variables is the number of students who are planning to be on campus at the start of this school year. This plan shares our goals and the general means by which we hope to achieve them in an effort to provide families with the information they need to make an informed decision about the start of the school year.

School will begin on Monday, August 24, 2020. We have pushed our originally scheduled start date back by one week to accommodate structural and instructional adaptations that will need to be made before our students are on campus.
Before- and after-care will be available.

We firmly believe that the school and the parents share the goal of educating our children in an environment that protects their health and safety and that of the faculty and staff. With that goal front of mind, the main components of our back-to-school plan are the following:

- **Live/in-person instruction**, with the **option for online/distance learning** from home
- **Health check protocol**
- Full-time **mask-wearing** for all faculty and staff and for most students at most times
- **Social distancing**
- **Frequent sanitizing**
- **Communication**

INSTRUCTION

We are planning to offer two models for instruction. **Both models will begin on Monday, Aug. 24.** The options are: 1) Live/in-person instruction and 2) online/distance education. Families are asked to carefully review the models as described below and commit to the model that will best serve their child(ren) for the first quarter of this school year. A form is included here. **Families are asked to return the completed form by Friday, Aug. 7.** Families will be given the opportunity to reconsider and commit each quarter.

It is important to keep in mind that a pandemic is unpredictable; any number of things could necessitate the implementation of online/distance learning for all students or perhaps a hybrid model. If students in the live/in-person model require quarantine or isolation for any reason, they will be allowed to utilize the online/distance model until they are able to return to the classroom.

A note regarding our preschool program: *In the event of a city or state mandate that we need to reduce the number of individuals that can be in our building, we would give priority to our preschool to remain open.*

Instruction Options

We are asking parents to carefully review the two options below. A form is included here which you are asked to **return by Friday, Aug. 7**, indicating which option you will choose for your child(ren) for the first quarter of the school year.

1. Live/In-Person Learning Option. We will limit as much as possible the mixing of students during the day, keeping their indoor activity to their homeroom classroom. In the case of subjects being taught by different teachers, the teachers will move from room to room rather than the students. Small-group work will be limited in the classroom. The committee is creatively considering the use of all of our available space on campus to accommodate classrooms as safely as possible. Teachers will use outdoor space to the extent possible to expand learning environments. Physical education will take place outside as much as possible and other arrangements will be made to adhere to the recommended guidelines.

2. Online/Distance Education Option. We are offering online/distance education for families seeking a totally virtual option. The model will be comparable to the live/in-person model. Families will be expected to commit to hours consistent with the in-classroom school day. Students will be required to complete assignments consistent with the students in the classroom.

Faith Formation

Faith formation is integral to our mission and we plan to continue to find ways to grow in our faith during this time. We will do everything we can to have the students attend Mass once a week (in small groups or via live-stream). We will continue to live our faith through regular prayer and devotions and to grow in our faith knowledge through catechesis.

Extracurricular Activities

The St. Louis City Department of Health requires activities and events like field trips, student assemblies, special performances, and school-wide parent meetings to be held virtually when possible and cancelled if virtual is impossible.

After-school clubs will be held virtually when possible or by following the protocols put in place by that organization and with administrative approval. Information about CYC sports will be released directly from that organization or from the SSP Athletic Association.

HEALTH

Vigilant health screening is such an integral component of our return to in-classroom school. While there is data to support that young children are less likely to contract or transmit the virus among themselves, we must also consider and protect the health of our adult faculty and staff, all of whom are vital to keeping our school functioning and flourishing.

We will be following the recommendation of the Department of Health and the CDC by requiring a daily health check of each student and will follow appropriate isolation / quarantine measures in the event of a suspected COVID-19 case.

If you are opting for live/in-person instruction, we ask that you and your child(ren) complete the **Health & Safety Pledge** included here, which bullet-points the general procedures outlined in this plan. It is an agreement to protect the health and safety of students, faculty, and staff. **Families are asked to return this form, one for each student who is opting for live/in-person instruction, by Friday, Aug. 7.**

Daily Health Check

Parents will conduct a daily health screening on their child(ren) and submit this information to the school before 7:20 a.m. each day. A **sample form** detailing the information we will request is included with this plan. The procedure by which this information will be collected is still being finalized.

School representatives will take daily temperatures of all students as they arrive at school. Faculty and staff will participate in the same daily screen and temperature check before entering the building.

Isolation/Quarantine

We will follow isolation/quarantine protocols from local agencies. If a student or teacher shows symptoms consistent with COVID-19, that individual will be isolated and sent home according to the local guidelines. If a teacher or student tests positive for COVID-19, the school will communicate to the families of that student or teacher's class. Names of individuals with positive test results will not be disclosed by the school.

Students or families who are sick or have been in contact with someone identified as COVID-19 positive will be required to quarantine for 10 days before returning to school or with proof of a negative COVID-19 test result. Inasmuch as their health condition allows, these students will be able to continue their learning at home with the full-time online-distance learning schedule. Families will be asked to sign an agreement that acknowledges their child will be learning from home and agreeing to self-isolate for 10 days before returning to school.

(Please see the **flowchart** included here for an illustration of how COVID-19 and suspected COVID-19 cases will be handled.)

Social and Emotional Health

The social and emotional health of the students is a vital component to our return to school. Our counselor Mary Ann Commes is available to assist your child and is working to build in opportunities within the day to meet the social and emotional needs of all students. Communication is key in this area and is a two-way relationship. We will communicate with you, and we want you to communicate with us.

MASK WEARING

All faculty and staff members are required to wear masks during the school day.

Students in grades 3 through 8 will be required to wear masks during the school day.

Students in preschool through grade 2 will wear masks into school at arrival, out of school at dismissal, in small-group work, and during transition from one space to another during the school day. Parents can choose to have their students wear masks all day.

Students may not be required to wear masks when they are outside at recess or outside for PE. Obviously, masks will be removed during eating and drinking at lunchtime.

Masks/face coverings can be masks or gaiters. They do not need to be a certain style or color, but we ask that there be no inappropriate, suggestive, or scary images, patterns, or language.

PHYSICAL DISTANCING

Arrival and Dismissal

Arrival and dismissal procedures for all students, preschool through 8th grade, will be changing for the 2020-21 school year. Details will be forthcoming.

Classroom Arrangement

We will require that students distance a minimum of 6 feet in the classroom. Preschool will enact distancing guidelines to the extent possible, recognizing they need to adapt for early childhood learning. Recognizing that 6 feet is not always possible, masks and proper hygiene will be of even greater importance.

Classrooms will have rows of desks at acceptable distances facing the front of the room. Any classroom that previously had tables or alternative seating will be re-equipped with individual desks. We may reassign larger spaces on our campus that can be designated as alternative classrooms. Where appropriate distance cannot be achieved, we may utilize plexiglass dividers to ensure safety.

School Supplies

School supplies will not be shared during the school day. Parents will be asked to provide a container to hold personal school supplies. More information about this will be provided before the start of school. As always, plan to replenish school supplies as needed and requested by the teacher.

Hallways and Stairwells

Particular stairwells will be designated as up-only or down-only. Hallways will be marked to travel on one's right side only (as in a car on the road).

Bathrooms

Bathroom breaks will be scheduled and monitored to allow for students to use the bathroom safely. Some stalls, urinals, and sinks will be unavailable in order to maintain distance.

Drinking Fountains

Drinking fountains are being fitted as bottle fillers and will no longer be available for direct drinking. Students will be allowed to bring a water bottle from home to have with them throughout the day and refill as needed. The bottles may only contain water.

Lunch and Recess

Lunch will be eaten in the classroom. A box or bagged lunch option will be available for purchase from Food Service Consultants. If a student forgets their lunch, they will be given a box lunch. Parents should not bring forgotten lunches to school. Recess will take place in a designated place outside, weather permitting.

Visitors and Volunteers

Only with the permission of administration will essential visitors or volunteers be admitted to campus. In the case that a visitor is admitted to campus, they must first pass the temperature check and standardized health assessment screening prior to admittance.

Any student who needs to be picked up from school early (e.g., for a doctor's appointment) will be escorted out of the building by a staff member.

SANITIZING

The school will be cleaned and sanitized daily.

Students will be expected to wash and/or sanitize their hands regularly. Students are encouraged to bring a container of hand sanitizer for their personal use at their desk. Hand-sanitizing stations will be located around campus for student use.

COMMUNICATION

We recognize the importance of parent-school communication in this climate. Our three main forms of communication with parents are 1) email, 2) updates to the school website, 3) and push or text notifications via FACTS-SIS. It is imperative that parents **check and read their email** on a daily basis and regularly check the school website in order to have the most up-to-date information regarding changes to protocols and procedures.

It is crucial, now more than ever, that the school office have your most current contact information. If you would like to verify the information we have for your family, please contact the school office at 314-752-4700.

SOURCES / SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS / LINKS

[St. Louis Archdiocese Office of Catholic Education Transition Task Force Report](#)

[City of St. Louis School Systems' Guidance for Reentry](#)

[City of St. Louis Schools' Infectious Disease Control Administrative Guidelines](#)

[City of St. Louis Department of Health's Social Distancing Guidelines](#)

[City of St. Louis Exclusion Guidance](#)

[American Academy of Pediatrics' Guidance for School Re-entry](#)

[Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education Reopening Guidance](#)