

Return to School During COVID-19 Plan 2020-2021

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Prayer & Introduction

Prayer for a New School Year

Lord Jesus, we ask for Your help as we begin this new school year. Allow us to experience Your presence in the many blessings You put before us. Open our eyes to the new challenges and exciting opportunities that this new school year brings. Open our heart and mind to new friends and new teachers. Give us a generous spirit to be enthusiastic with our studies and courage to accept new opportunities. Help us to be attentive to what is asked of us, to be flexible if distance schooling is required of us, to be patient if plans must change, and let us experience Your presence in all those we encounter. Jesus, inspire us to do our best this year! Amen.

Introduction

First, I would like to thank the many wonderful parents, faculty, staff, and students who made our first attempt at distance/online learning successful this past spring. We could not have done it without the prayer, commitment, guidance, and support of our St. James Catholic School Family! Each one of you is a blessing!

As we look to begin another school year, we strive to be prepared to face whatever challenges and unforeseen circumstances come our way. We will be implementing some new practices, which we hope will serve well to keep our children in school and the virus out of school! The spiritual, emotional, physical, and educational well-being of our students is always foremost in our minds as we make plans for future educational experiences at St. James.

We strongly desire the children to be at school for their education and are working diligently alongside with Public Health Solutions, our Diocesan Education Office, and Crete Public School to make this goal a safe reality.

We greatly appreciate your prayers for this endeavor and ask for your patience as there will likely be changes in routines and expectations as new guidelines, requirements, and recommendations are put forth by our local health agencies, government, and Diocese.

Keeping our focus on God and His gracious gifts will help us to stay positive and true to our school mission of providing a Christ-centered education.

In the Heart of Christ the King,
Sister Mary Alma, C.K.

A Catholic Perspective

As members of a Catholic School Family, it is important that we remember our first duty of prayer for our fellow brothers and sisters who may have been, presently are, or will be adversely affected by the pandemic. The Catechism of the Catholic Church tells us, “Our prayer is efficacious because it is united in faith with the prayer of Jesus.” (CCC:#545) Thus, let us pray and not grow weary.

One very common definition of the merciful love of God is His ability to bring good out of evil. As we struggle through this difficult time of financial, physical, emotional, and spiritual concerns, recall that 2 Timothy 2:13 tells us, “...even if we are faithless, God always remains faithful for He cannot deny Himself.” We are not alone! God will bring good out of our struggles – if we allow Him to do so. Perhaps, you have noticed during this time of greater suffering and isolation, families reconnecting and spending more time together at family meals, talking, riding bikes and going for walks together. Many have enjoyed a slower pace of life and have found that sometimes “less is more.”



Health & Safety

Although at some point COVID-19 will become a distant memory, we need to have a plan in place to implement this fall if it would be necessary. We began this process in March 2020 as we worked with Public Health Solutions and the Diocesan Education Office to develop the strategy used to guide us through the end of the school year. With God's help, we did that successfully.

Now we plan once again. This document outlines our current plan and will continue to be updated as we discover which "best practices" can be implemented and used effectively at St. James School. **Words in red type denote plans specific to St. James School** while the black type signifies general principles.

As we plan, we will:

- Continue to follow guidance from the Diocese
- Continue to follow guidance from the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) and the Public Health Solutions.
- Continue to collaborate with Crete Public Schools
- Implement plans to mitigate the risk of resurgence of the virus and other sicknesses.
- Encourage self-assessment and monitoring of symptoms.
- Continue wellness education.
- Endeavor to protect those who are at the highest risk for severe illness.

Centers for Disease Control (CDC) Recommendations for Mitigating Risk of Transmissions

CDC: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/prevention.html>)

Lancaster County <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html>

Know how it spreads:

- There is currently no vaccine to prevent coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19).
- The best way to prevent illness is to avoid being exposed to this virus.
- The virus is thought to spread mainly from person-to-person.

- Between people who are in close contact with one another (within about 6 feet).
- Through respiratory droplets produced when an infected person coughs, sneezes or talks.
- These droplets can land in the mouths or noses of people who are nearby or possibly be inhaled into the lungs.
- Some recent studies have suggested that COVID-19 may be spread by people who are not showing symptoms.



Face Coverings

Wear facemasks to prevent the spread of the virus when in close proximity while speaking, coughing, sneezing.

- All children, faculty, and staff should have a mask at school.
- Parents are encouraged to provide children with their own mask to ensure proper fitting and to wash daily. Facemasks may be purchased or homemade and should be of a plain color or simple in design.
- St. James School will provide facemasks to children or parents in need.
- Pre-K children will wear masks in hallways and other common spaces but not while in their own classroom or outside.
- Kindergarten through 6th grade children will wear masks in the classrooms, at Mass, and in the hallways. There will be several “mask breaks” throughout the day. Mask breaks will occur outside, or in large rooms such as the gym or parish hall, or in the classroom for a short periods of time (under fifteen minutes) when students are “distanced” from each other.
- Faculty and Staff members will wear facemasks throughout the day. Primary teachers may choose to wear face shields rather than facemasks for short periods of time when teaching Phonics skills.
- Students and teachers in Speech and ELL classes may wear face shields rather than facemasks.
- Children will not need to wear facemasks when outside, at lunch, in PE classes or when “distanced” in large areas such as the parish hall or gym.

- When possible, Music classes will be held in the parish hall or outside with adequate spacing between children. The children will not need to wear masks when Music class is held in these locations.

Social Distancing

- Practice social distancing, also called “physical distancing,”
 - Stay at least 6 feet (about 2 arms’ length) from other people
 - Do not gather in groups
 - Stay out of crowded places and avoid large gatherings



- Floor cues, wall signs, and verbal reminders of social distancing will be used at St. James when and where appropriate.
- Our schools will be following the guidelines of Public Health Solutions to allow for proper social distancing as is possible in classrooms, cafeterias, hallways, etc.

Hand Hygiene and Respiratory Etiquette

Wash your hands often.



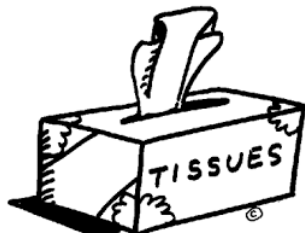
- Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds especially after you have been in a public place, or after blowing your nose, coughing, or sneezing.
- If soap and water are not readily available, **use a hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol.** Cover all surfaces of your hands and rub them together until they feel dry.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands.
- St. James will use verbal reminders and wall signs to encourage handwashing – especially after coughing, sneezing, using the



restroom, before meals, and periodically throughout the day. Ample hand sanitation stations will be available throughout the school.

Cover coughs and sneezes

- If you are in a private setting and do not have on your cloth face covering, remember to always cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when you cough or sneeze or use the inside of your elbow.
- Throw used tissues in the trash.



- Immediately wash your hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. If soap and water are not readily available, clean your hands with a hand sanitizer that contains **at least 60% alcohol**.
- St. James will provide wall signs and verbal reminders when appropriate to remind everyone of proper respiratory etiquette.

Disinfecting and Sanitation Plan

- Frequently touched surfaces will be cleaned and disinfected daily. This includes tables, doorknobs, light switches, countertops, handles, desks, phones, keyboards, toilets, faucets, and sinks.
- Dirty surfaces will be cleaned with detergent/soap prior to disinfection.
- St. James School will engage in a deep cleaning/disinfecting process quarterly or more often if necessary.

Symptom Monitoring and Self-Assessment

- **Be alert for symptoms.** Watch for fever, cough, shortness of breath, or other symptoms **of COVID-19**. (sore throat, chills, muscle or body aches, fatigue, new loss of taste or smell, etc..)
- **Take your temperature** if symptoms develop.
 - Don't take your temperature within 30 minutes of exercising or after taking medications that could lower your temperature, like acetaminophen.

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/prevention.html>

Nurses Station

The nurse's office has additional supplies (face masks, thermometers, disinfectant wipes, etc...).

- A separate location by the Principal's Office is designated as a holding area in case a student is suspected of having COVID-19 or another serious illness. The purpose of this is to limit exposure of other students to their illness as they await being picked up from school.

School Policy on Vaccinations and Sickness

In an effort to keep all individuals safe and healthy in our schools, we ask that families abide by our **immunization policy** found in the Parent Handbook page 14.

- By state law, students may not enter school until immunization records are complete and up-to-date. Students entering K or 1st grade or transfer students: 3 doses of DtaP, DTP, or DT vaccine with 1 dose given on or after the 4th birthday; 3 doses of Polio vaccine; 2 doses of MMR vaccine, given on or after 12 months of age and separated by at least one month; 3 doses of Hepatitis B vaccine, 2 doses of Varicella (chickenpox) vaccine.

If your child has a fever, please do not send them to school until your child is fever/symptom free for 72 hours.



Procedure for On-Site School Outbreak

St. James School System will be working closely with the Public Health Solutions to determine a responsible and appropriate course of action should a break-out of COVID-19 or another sickness occur. Exposure to the Corona virus would be treated differently than confirmed cases.

Re-Admittance to School

- If a student or staff member tests positive for COVID-19 and has symptoms he/she will be excluded for 10 days from the onset of symptoms and only allowed to return 24 hours after fever resolution and respiratory symptoms have improved. Please report positive test results to the Public Health Solutions District Health Department at 402 826-3880.
- If a student or staff member tests negative he/she will be excluded until fever free without the use of fever reducing medications for 24 hours and if respiratory symptoms have improved.
- If a student or staff member with symptoms chooses not to be tested for COVID-19 he/she will be excluded for 10 days from the onset of symptoms and only allowed to return 24 hours after fever resolution and respiratory symptoms have improved.

Academics & Student Success

Instructional Plan

We head into the school year with the intention of learning taking place in our school building. We most likely would resort to total distance/online learning only if required to do so by the governor, county health department, DEO and/or our Bishop.

Technology

St. James is very blessed to be supported by the Lincoln Diocesan Tech Office which will lend devices to families in need should distance learning be required.

- Should there be a need for distance learning, St. James will utilize Powerschool Learning, Seesaw and Facebook.

Distance Learning

If instruction is needed to be given outside of school building, the school will send an updated explanation of how to proceed. The priority would first be on the core classes (as it pertains to each grade level). We also realize the need to make use of textbooks when possible to alleviate the strain for those who may have minimal or no internet access. To make the distance/online instruction manageable, the number of

assignments per subject would likely be reduced, but expectations would remain high. Allowing for a variety of ways in which student work can be submitted is important as well as utilizing frequent and varied formative assessment methods.

- St. James teachers will create ways to maintain the school community with their students. They will work to maintain daily rituals, invite families to take part in virtual prayer activities, and socialization at some level among the students.

Grading for Distance Learning

We will plan to use our current grading system for core classes so as to maintain a spirit of consistency and rigor. However, the number of assignments given, number of grades recorded, and expectations for given assignments may be altered to accommodate various needs and to allow for student success.

Classroom – Social Distancing

As we begin the new school year, we will attempt to allow for social distancing to the best of our abilities. Students will most likely be sitting at separate desks in straight rows facing forward towards the front of the classroom. We will minimize shared supplies that cannot be easily sanitized between uses. Floor cues as well as wall signs and verbal reminders will help students observe proper social distancing.

- Desks will be arranged in classrooms to provide social distancing as far as possible.
- Grades 1 -6 classrooms and Specialty Class combinations are limited to 25 students per room.
- Pre-K and Kindergarten classrooms may be limited to 15 children per room.
- Items which cannot be easily sanitized such as Play Dough, crayons, markers, etc. are individualized.
- Toys and learning objects will be sanitized daily.

Movement of Individuals in the School Building

Health officials encourage minimal movement of individuals within the school buildings. Because of this, at times teachers may be asked to switch rooms instead of students. Specific patterns of traveling throughout the school may be set so that fewer students will cross paths or gather in any given area.

- There will likely be a traffic pattern in both individual classrooms and hallways to mitigate exposure.

Gatherings & Events

Bus and Arrival for School Day

We are delighted to welcome the children back to school. Please note the following arrival procedures for a safe entry into the new school year. We ask that parents delivering children to school not leave until a successful completion of the temperature check. Parents of children who ride the bus should ensure that your children have a normal temperature before they venture onto the bus.

- Buses will be sanitized between each use. Parents should ensure children's normal temperature, before allowing them on the bus. Children are asked to wear masks while riding on the bus due to close proximity.
- Bus and Pre-K children are dropped off by the northwest corner of parish hall.
- K-6 children are dropped off by the southwest corner of parish hall near the flagpole.
- Temperatures will be taken at drop-off stations. Children with a normal temperature will join their classmates at a designated place on the playground or in the parish hall.

Late Arrivals

Punctuality is a form of kindness and consideration to others and we desire our children to learn this special type of self-discipline. We understand, however, that at times most everyone runs late. On such a day

- Parents with PreK or Kindergarten children who arrive after 8:10 am will knock on Mrs. Tranmer's window. A Teacher Assistant will take the child's temperature at the north door before admitting the child.
- 1st through 6th grade children who arrive after 8:10 am should go to the area designated for daily Mass to have their temperatures taken before joining their classmates.

Mass

How Mass is celebrated will largely be dictated by the directions of the Bishop. Presently, we encourage, but do not mandate, that Holy Communion be received on the hand. The Sign of Peace will not be physically extended. Depending on the suggestions of the Health department, the number of students present for any given Mass may vary. Singing will be limited and those assisting in the sanctuary (servers, readers) may also be minimal. Live Streaming will be used if necessary.

- Children in grades 1-6 will attend daily Mass in the Church and wear masks except when receiving Holy Communion.
- Parishioners attending daily Mass will receive Holy Communion before the St. James School children, faculty, and staff.
- Mass attendees will be encouraged to receive Holy Communion in the hand and children taught proper reverence.

Lunch

All workers will wear gloves and masks while on duty with special attention being given to handwashing and sanitizing surfaces and utensils used in food preparation. Appropriate plastic guards will be in place to separate the food from those being served. Disinfecting the tables and chairs between each lunch period will be standard.

- The atrium has been moved out of the cafeteria to provide more room for distancing during lunch.
- Lunch will occur in two shifts.
- Parents wanting to eat lunch with their children may do so outside of the school building at a designated location.

Water Bottles

- Children are to bring their own water bottle to school. Please label the water bottle with the child's name and grade and fill with water before arriving at school.

Recess

Getting outdoors and/or having unorganized free time is healthy for students and a beneficial way to practice Christian cooperation, compassion, and community. As we begin our new school year, we will be following the suggestions of the local health department in regards to number of students out on a playground at one time; making sure shared equipment is sanitized before

another group of students plays with the same equipment; and being creative and introducing games that naturally make use of social distancing.

- Recess will be held in small groups outside whenever possible. In inclement weather, recess will be held in separate areas of the gym or in individual grade level classrooms.

Specialty Classes

Specialty classes play an important role in contributing to a well-rounded education. Our Art, Music, Physical Education, Library, and Computer classes will still operate.

- Art classes will be held in individual homerooms.
- Music classes will be held in the parish hall to provide distancing.
- PE classes will be held outside whenever possible or in separate sections of the gym.
- Library classes will be held in individual homerooms. Books requested by students for home reading will be brought to them individually.
- Computer classes will be held in the Media Center using distancing practices.

Assemblies/Concerts/Programs

It is important to celebrate our students' successes, to share group learning activities at times utilizing outside speakers, and to share our students' talents through various performances. What these group experiences look like will depend on the up-to-date requirements and suggestions of the Public Health Solutions as well as our Diocesan guidelines.

- Social distancing, the wearing of facemasks, and frequent disinfecting of surfaces and equipment will be employed to provide the safest, educational experience we can offer.
- If situations warrant it, assemblies, concerts, and/or programs will be postponed or cancelled to assure, to the best of our ability, the safety of all participants.

After School Activities

Activities held after school are an exciting part of many students' educational experience. We will plan to continue to offer these opportunities but will put into practice suggestions handed down to us from the Public Health Solutions and from our Diocesan Education Office. Social distancing, good hand hygiene and respiratory

etiquette, as well as frequent disinfecting will be used to provide a safe, healthy, and educational experience for all involved.

Dismissal

We want to end the day on a good note and continue with strong safety and distancing practices.

- Children will stay in their own homerooms until called by the Office to the bus or car line.
- Children riding on the bus are asked to wear masks due to close proximity.
- Walkers will leave in small groups monitored by a staff member when called by the Office.

Conclusion

Thank you for your careful attention to the safety measures you can take at home and for supporting our school guidelines to protect all in the St. James School Family. May God bless our new school year!

