August 20, 2020

Dear Parents,

We understand you’ve been anxiously awaiting the reopening plans of our diocesan schools. As we’ve prepared to welcome back our students and teachers this fall, our partnership with you will continue to be instrumental throughout the school year.

It remains our goal, and is included in our daily prayers, to open our school doors for on-site learning for the first day of school. We understand the value of face-to-face instruction and the faith-based learning environment that your child/children experience in each of our schools. Our Diocese of Des Moines Catholic Schools have worked diligently to create re-opening plans that focus attention on the whole child.

We continue to seek input from our diocesan medical partners to stay abreast of the fluidity of the virus. This team has assisted in our health and safety plan with mitigation strategies to help keep us in school and our students, faculty and staff as safe as we can be. The Diocese of Des Moines Catholic Schools will continue to work with our health professionals in conjunction with state and local public health officials to solidify decisions related to best practices surrounding infectious disease control.

Each diocesan school’s Iowa Department of Education Return-to-Learn approved plan is posted on their websites. Included in this document are the diocesan-wide protocols that all of our elementary schools will follow. This plan represents what we know as of August 20, 2020. I ask that you continue to watch for communications from your child/children’s school for updates.

Thank you for your continued support of Catholic education.

Donna Bishop
Superintendent of Schools
Diocese of Des Moines
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IOWA DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH INFORMATION
Each of our diocesan Catholic PS-8th grade schools plans to reopen school for in-person instruction in August. Please consult your local school for their scheduled opening day. The key components of each school’s reopening plan addresses the health and safety of our students, teachers and staff at school. It is every person’s responsibility to help us keep our school community safe.

Please remember - these are plans as of August 20, 2020. As this is a fluid situation, we will continue to revise protocols and update you as we approach the opening of school.
The Diocese of Des Moines Catholic Schools are committed to meeting the needs of families during these unusual times. Our goal remains to keep our schools open for students to learn, pray and grow together as a community. We are preparing a healthy and safe school environment for our students and staff to return in August.

Traditional, in-person learning will be available and will provide students and teachers with the safe experience we have all come to expect. As a result, in-person learning will include additional COVID-19 risk mitigation efforts outlined in this booklet such as use of face coverings, physical distancing and daily temperature checks.

While traditional, in-person learning will be the choice for many families, our schools will also offer the option for students to attend classes remotely for the 2020-2021 school year.
TRADITIONAL IN-PERSON LEARNING:
Traditional, in-person learning will have students in classrooms with peers and teachers. A number of health and safety protocols are in place to ensure the well-being of all students and staff. A complete listing of the safety and health protocols in place can be viewed on pages 12-14.

If your family has completed the regular registration and enrollment process for the 2020-2021 school year, your student is already enrolled for in-person learning.

Students who attend in-person learning will be assessed early in the school year and classroom instruction will be differentiated to accommodate students at, below or above grade-level.

While each school's plan may vary slightly, students at all our schools will follow a model in which they are with the same teacher and cohort of students throughout the school day. Transitions to specials classes will be limited, but the full academic offerings will be available. By limiting the number of transitions, we can promote a safe and healthy environment while maximizing instructional time.

While it is our goal that our schools remain open for in-person 5-day instruction, we must adhere to public health mandates from the Governor and local health departments.

In the event that we are directed to close our schools again, all students will be able to quickly pivot to remote learning that continues their rigorous and personalized education from the teachers they know and love.
HOW TEACHERS WILL SUPPORT In-Person learning

1. Whether your child learns in-class or remotely, we will continue to foster positive, caring and faith-filled relationships with all students and families.

2. Physical distancing and adjusted schedules ensure that academic learning can progress successfully. Teachers will remain flexible in the style and type of lessons provided.

3. All classrooms will regularly practice healthy hygiene including hand-washing, the use of hand sanitizer, and regular cleaning and sanitization of surfaces and classroom items.

4. Teachers will continue regular assessments of students to ensure the academic program at school is meeting the needs of all students.

5. Teachers are dedicated to maintaining the same high expectations for our students, whether students are learning in the classroom or remotely.
HOW PARENTS CAN SUPPORT In-Person learning

1. Model healthy hygiene for your kids. Wear face coverings as recommended, launder uniforms often, wash hands, and sanitize items that travel between school and home.

2. Stay connected and be informed. Review all school communications and ask questions as needed.

3. Contact the school immediately in the event of a medical diagnosis or family emergency.

4. Maintain morning and evening routines that support a successful school year for your student(s).

5. Your continued support helps ensure the future success of our parish and school community.
REMOTE LEARNING:
For some families, the remote learning option may be necessary for medical or other reasons. Our schools are prepared to partner with any family that would like to explore the remote learning option. Families will be able to opt into remote learning for each trimester of school. Additionally, families may elect to return to the school building for traditional in-person learning.

In the event of a student illness or other family medical emergency, students can transition to remote learning as necessary.

All students who participate in remote learning will receive grades and attendance will be recorded. Teachers will provide direct lessons, personalized instruction and students and families will be expected to adhere to all appropriate learning expectations.

Students will be assessed and will receive regular homework assignments. In some instances, on campus assessments may need to be administered outside of the regular school day to ensure academic needs are being met.

A student enrolled in remote learning is still a full-time student at a Diocese of Des Moines Catholic School. The same school policies and procedures apply to students whether they participate in remote learning or attend class in-person. Students enrolled in remote learning may also participate in extracurricular school activities and athletics. Tuition rates for both in-person and remote learning remain the same.

In order to be considered for the fully remote learning option, please contact your local school administration.
HOW TEACHERS WILL SUPPORT Remote learning

1. Whether your child learns in-class or remotely, we will continue to foster positive, caring and faith-filled relationships with all students and families.

2. Teachers will provide a high quality digital learning environment which includes video instruction, lessons, direct teaching, activities and assessments.

3. Our teachers are highly committed to the education of all our students. As a result, our teachers continue to learn and grow in their ability to instruct students in a digital space.

4. At home schedules, technology access and day-to-day life is busy and flexibility is key. We are mindful of these challenges and will ensure the academic needs of all students are met.

5. Teacher-designed instruction, assignments and assessment will allow for both synchronous and asynchronous learning experiences.

6. Teachers are dedicated to maintaining the same high expectations for our students, whether students are learning in the classroom or remotely.
HOW PARENTS CAN SUPPORT Remote learning

1. Set up a remote learning routine that includes time for meals, review of daily work, live classes, and homework.

2. Visit with your children about their daily goals, homework, special links, and live classes.

3. Help your child develop goals for each day to help them focus on their provided work and meet expectations.

4. Let the teacher know if you or your child are struggling with any technology, resources, class content or homework.

5. Be sure your child's remote learning schedule has plenty of breaks built-in for outdoor play and quiet time.

6. Take care of your and your child's emotional well-being. Both adults and children are feeling a lot of anxiety over the inability to control our situation.
Whether your family chooses in-person or remote learning for your child(ren), all families enrolled at Diocese of Des Moines Catholic Schools remain a member of our vibrant school and parish communities.

Just as parents partner with our schools in-person, it is critical for school families to demonstrate the home-school partnership in a virtual format as well. It is this home-school partnership that makes our schools and students successful, whether in the classroom or online.
The following changes will be implemented at all our schools to support the overall safety and well-being of our students and staff.

- Access to school building and campuses will be minimized.
- Shared objects and materials used at school will be limited.
- Use of drinking fountains (except for refilling stations) will be prohibited.
- Students and staff are encouraged to bring water in reusable containers.
- Water bottles must go home daily to be cleaned.
- Student belongings will be kept separate.
- All student field trips and travel are cancelled until further notice.
- Lunch program workers will follow safety guidelines for food preparation and distribution.
- Plexiglass/sneeze guards will be installed where feasible.
- Delivery drop zones may be created to limit the number of visitors in the building.
- Review of re-opening plans will continue throughout the year.
- Based on community needs, schools may employ additional mitigation practices.
PROMOTING A HEALTHY SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT

ENHANCED CLEANING/DISINFECTING:
Our facilities team in conjunction with our faculty will implement enhanced cleaning protocols on a daily basis.

- Routine cleaning and disinfecting of frequently touched surfaces within the school building throughout the day.

- Cleaning regimen to use EPA approved cleaning and disinfecting products and equipment for use against viral pathogens including COVID-19.

HEALTH SCREENING:
- The health of students, faculty and staff will be monitored daily. Temperature check procedures will vary by school. Contact your school administrator for details.

- All student, faculty and staff concerns will be reviewed by Public Health and the Diocesan Medical Health Team.
HEALTHY HYGIENE PRACTICES:
- Daily routines enabling students and staff to regularly wash hands and use hand sanitizer.

- Practices that ensure personal health and safety will be used including: hand-washing, avoiding contact with one's eyes, nose and mouth, and covering coughs and sneezes.

- Hand sanitizer will be available throughout the school.

PROTECTIVE EQUIPMENT:
- Students will wear face coverings when physical distancing is not possible, i.e. entering/exiting the building and when maneuvering in the hallways. Parents must provide their student(s) with face coverings for use in school.

- Small group activity while in classrooms may require face coverings.

PROTECTIVE EQUIPMENT:
- Faculty and staff will wear face coverings while working with students when physical distancing is not possible.

- Proper wear and use of face coverings will be taught and reinforced by classroom teachers. **Face coverings are particularly helpful when physical distancing is not feasible.**

PHYSICAL DISTANCING:
- To the extent possible, we will practice physical distancing in classrooms, hallways, bathrooms, on the playground during recess/lunch and during drop off/pick up.

- To promote physical distancing, the measures outlined on the next page will be implemented.
PHYSICAL DISTANCING Measures

1. We will teach physical distancing practices.
2. We will maximize space between student desks as much as possible.
3. We will reduce extra items in classrooms to allow for more space.
4. We will avoid congestion when students use bathrooms.
5. We will stagger recess/lunch and designate play areas by grade.
6. We will reduce hallway traffic during passing periods.
7. We will limit direct contact during drop-off and pick-up procedures.
8. We will promote physical distancing in the office area.
9. We will limit unnecessary movement around the school and campus.
Our primary objective is to provide a learning rich environment grounded in our Catholic faith to all students.

Our highly trained faculty is ready and prepared to provide a quality education that facilitates mastery of all Iowa Common Core and Diocesan Content Standards.

The team is also ready and prepared to provide both asynchronous (recorded) and synchronous (live) learning should it be required in the event of a school closure or should a parent elect the remote learning option.

CLASSROOMS:
To the extent possible, we will minimize mixing students in classrooms, hallways and bathrooms, on the playground during recess/lunch and during drop off/pick up.

Each school will put in place measures that will minimize student contact. Sample procedures can be found on page 18.
COLLABORATION:
Our teachers continue to collaborate as Professional Learning Communities (PLC). Staff share expertise and instructional strategies to meet the needs of each individual learner.

INITIAL SCREENING ASSESSMENTS:
At the beginning of the school year, teachers are prepared to assess each student’s current academic needs and address any potential gaps in learning.
CLASSROOM Measures

1. Where possible, we will limit the number of staff and classroom spaces to which students are exposed.

2. We will minimize sharing of materials and community supplies.

3. There will be no shared storage of student materials, i.e. cubbies/lockers.

4. Student field trips and travel are cancelled for the foreseeable future.

5. We will stagger classroom release times to reduce the number of students in the hallways.

6. We have put recess protocols in place to encourage physical distancing.
A key component of our re-opening plan is to prepare contingencies should there be a need to implement a remote learning program due to extended absences or a mandatory school-wide closures.

BRIDGING THE CLASSROOM AND HOME:
Each school will use cloud based platforms for the delivery of instruction, workflow, communication and collaboration with students. Technology platforms will support in-school classroom instruction and provide a means for maintaining continuity should the school be required to close and move to remote learning.

These platforms will:
- Allow for student-teacher feedback.
- Allow students to complete and submit assignments.
- Provide access to educational tools.
- Offer live instruction and video options.
REMOTE LEARNING - STUDENT ILLNESS:
We understand that at any given time, a student may be required to stay at home to recover from illness. The learning plan for these students is to provide continuity between in-class and remote learning on a short term basis (two weeks or less) to minimize the disruption to learning. This plan is not meant as a replacement for in-class instruction.

By frequently checking the school’s online platforms and staying in contact with the student’s teacher(s), parents and students will be able to keep up with assigned work.

REMOTE LEARNING - SCHOOL CLOSURE:
Remote learning is necessary if the stay-at-home order is reinstated by our Governor and/or local public health departments.

REMOTE LEARNING - SCHOOL CLOSURE:
Remote learning can occur asynchronously (recorded) or synchronously (live).

Asynchronous remote learning is when instruction and learning do not happen at the same time for all students. The teacher provides instruction which could be pre-recorded videos, resources and tasks. Students access learning at a time that works for the student and their family.

Synchronous remote learning is an approach where students and teachers are engaged online and learning at the same time. This occurs through video-conferencing (ie Zoom). Expectations will be clearly defined for students, parents, and teachers. Models of consistent learning experiences for each grade level are being developed.
We understand the importance of establishing a positive, safe and supportive learning environment as our students navigate the unprecedented challenges due to the disruptions caused by the pandemic.

We are committed to helping our students by infusing social and emotional support into our students’ experience at school.

- Opportunities for students to interact with their classmates, teachers and staff in the classroom as well as during recess and lunch.
- School counselors and teachers are developing plans to identify and address student needs.
- School administrations are working with parish pastors and the diocesan re-opening committee to put in place the celebration of Mass.
- Our schools are collaborating with various outside agencies to provide additional social-emotional support for students, families and staff.
We are committed to ongoing, timely, and informative communication between school and home. In order to provide effective communication, the following will be provided:

- **Website**: The school will post resources and updates on the COVID-19 resource tab.

- **Parish Communication**: Information will be shared via parish bulletins, email and newsletters.

- **Email**: The school will use email to notify and inform parents about COVID-19 information.

- **Social Media**: Each school will use its social media platforms to share information. We invite parents to like their school’s Facebook page as well as the Diocesan Office of Catholic Schools Facebook page for updated information.
FREQUENTLY ASKED Questions

1. **WILL STUDENTS ATTEND MASS AT SCHOOL?** Each school will offer a Mass schedule that accommodates spiritual growth while maintaining health and safety standards.

2. **ARE ADDITIONAL SCHOOL MATERIALS REQUIRED?** The provided school supply list includes all necessary materials students need while at school.

3. **DO STUDENTS WEAR FACE COVERINGS AT SCHOOL?** Students, faculty and staff will wear face coverings when physical distancing is not possible. (see page 12)

4. **CAN WE MOVE TO REMOTE LEARNING DUE TO MEDICAL DIAGNOSIS?** Remote learning is available for families and students to use in the event of a medical diagnosis or emergency.

5. **WHAT TECHNOLOGY IS REQUIRED FOR REMOTE LEARNING?** Remote learning requires access to an internet-capable device and a reliable internet connection.

6. **WHAT REMOTE LEARNING PLATFORMS WILL BE USED?** Remote learning platforms vary by school and may include SeeSaw, Google Classroom and Canvas. Please check with your school for specifics.

7. **CAN REMOTE LEARNERS PARTICIPATE IN SCHOOL ACTIVITIES?** Remote learners may participate in school activities if the student’s parents sign the appropriate waiver and release forms.

8. **WHAT INSTRUCTION WILL REMOTE LEARNERS RECEIVE?** Teachers will provide video lessons, direct instruction, assignment feedback and individual assessments.

9. **WILL ATTENDANCE BE TAKEN?** Attendance will be taken for all students. The same school policies apply to students whether they attend class remotely or in-person.
As accredited non-public schools in the state of Iowa, the following two pages of guidance from the Iowa Department of Education and the Iowa Department of Public Health will be followed, including any further versions released.
Evaluating Sick Students and Staff
Reopening Iowa’s Schools Safely and Responsibly

High Risk Symptoms
New cough, shortness of breath or difficulty breathing, new loss
of taste or smell

Low Risk Symptoms
Fever, headache, muscle and body aches, fatigue, sore throat,
runny nose, congestion, nausea, vomiting, diarrhea

Students and staff members should remain home when sick. Students or staff members with any high-risk symptom or two or more low risk symptoms should stay home and are advised to seek an evaluation by a health care provider.

Evaluation by Health Care Provider

Negative COVID-19 Test
Return to school after 24 hours with no fever (without the use of fever-reducing medicine) and symptoms improving

Alternative Diagnosis

Positive COVID-19 Test
Return to school after 24 hours with no fever (without the use of fever-reducing medicine) and symptoms improving and 10 days since symptoms started

Identifying Close Contacts for COVID-19 Cases
Close Contact: Individuals who’ve been within 6 feet for more than 15 minutes with a positive COVID-19 case during the infectious period. Contact may occur in a classroom, lunchroom, free period, during transportation to or from school, at practices or games, and during extracurricular activities.

School will:
- Notify local public health department
- Identify close contacts and quarantine exposed students and staff
- Notify appropriate school administration, families and staff (without identifying the COVID-19 case)
- Provide Public Health with list of close contacts

Public Health will:
- Recommend quarantine for all household contacts of COVID-19 case
- Work with school to determine which students and staff should be quarantined

Students
- If no symptoms develop, students can return to school 14 days from their last contact with the COVID-19 case
- If symptoms develop, students should be evaluated by a health care provider
- If a student tests positive for COVID-19, they should isolate for 10 days
- If a student tests negative for COVID-19, they must still complete their 14-day quarantine before returning to school

Staff
- Staff may be considered critical personnel and can be allowed to return to work if there are staffing shortages as long as they remain asymptomatic
- Staff should take their temperature and screen for symptoms at the start and end of each day, and wear a mask at work
- If symptoms develop, they must isolate immediately

Individuals Previously Positive
- Those who have been previously diagnosed positive for COVID-19 within the past 12 weeks, and were exposed to a COVID-19 case, do not need to quarantine

This plan is fluid and subject to change as more information becomes available.
RETURN TO LEARN
Reopening Iowa’s Schools Safely and Responsibly

COMMUNITY TRANSMISSION: NONE TO MINIMAL
0-5% positivity in county on average over the past 14 days
* Healthcare resources remain stable

SUGGESTED STRATEGIES
• Stay home if you are sick or exposed to someone confirmed to have COVID-19
• Practice frequent hand washing
• Stay 6 feet from others as much as possible
• Use face coverings when able to do so safely and correctly
• Maintain frequent cleaning schedule using EPA-approved cleaning products
• Monitor absenteeism among teachers, staff, and students

RETURN-TO-LEARN MODEL(S)
On-Site Learning following DOE, IDPH and CDC guidance.

COMMUNITY TRANSMISSION: MINIMAL TO MODERATE
6-14% positivity in a county on average over the past 14 days
* Healthcare resources remain stable

SUGGESTED STRATEGIES
• Continue above strategies
• Reduce group events/gatherings
• Limit inter-school interactions
• Ensure student and staff groupings/cohorts are as static as possible and that interactions among groups of students and staff are limited

RETURN-TO-LEARN MODEL(S)
On-Site Learning following DOE, IDPH and CDC guidance.

COMMUNITY TRANSMISSION: SUBSTANTIAL CONTROLLED
15-20% positivity in a county on average over the past 14 days AND 10% absenteeism among students expected for in-person learning
* Healthcare resources remain stable

SUGGESTED STRATEGIES
• Continue above strategies
• Consider regular health checks for any on-site students/staff if feasible
• Cancel school events/gatherings
• Close communal spaces (e.g., cafeterias, media centers)

RETURN-TO-LEARN MODEL(S)
Hybrid Learning as necessary based on:
• Parent or guardian preference
• Student quarantine
Temporary Continuous/Remote Learning for an entire school building or district for up to 14 days may be requested:
• Please contact the Department of Education by submitting your information via the CASA system.
• Only the Departments of Education and Public Health can make the determination and provide temporary authorization to move to 100% online or remote learning.

COMMUNITY TRANSMISSION: SUBSTANTIAL UNCONTROLLED
>20% positivity in a county on average over the past 14 days with healthcare resource capacity concerns

SUGGESTED STRATEGIES
State and local education and public health officials should work closely together to make decisions on school operations.

RETURN-TO-LEARN MODEL(S)
Temporary Continuous/Remote Learning for an entire school building or district for up to 14 days may be requested:
• Please contact the Department of Education by submitting your information via the CASA system.
• Only the Departments of Education and Public Health can make the determination and provide temporary authorization to move to 100% online or remote learning.
“AS A BODY IS ONE THOUGH IT HAS MANY PARTS, AND ALL THE PARTS OF THE BODY, THOUGH MANY, ARE ONE BODY, SO ALSO CHRIST.”

1 CORINTHIANS 12

Together we will continue to navigate these unprecedented waters.
- The Diocese of Des Moines, Office of Catholic Schools