

St. Mary's School of Piscataway
Reopening Plan
Quarter 4
School Year 2020-2021

*This plan will be updated quarterly or when there is significant development in the COVID-19 pandemic.

Spring 2021

Dear St. Mary's School of Piscataway Families:

This past year has thrown our worlds into a situation none of us expected nor really understood at the time. We were given no choice but to close our campus and transfer all our teaching and learning experiences to the internet.

We have taken great care to determine how we will bring our children back to campus and to develop a reopening plan designed with their safety and academic progress in mind. We surveyed parents and teachers to determine everyone's preferences, carefully monitored local and state government recommendations, and we assembled a Reopening Task Force in order to consult individuals with specific areas of expertise who could offer the necessary perspectives. The Task Force consisted of Father Plummer, 4 teachers, 14 parents/guardians (both new and veteran), and me. We met several times to discuss possibilities and we kept coming back to the same questions of safety, community consensus and the continued viability of our school. We gathered in prayer and invited the Holy Spirit into our midst, confident the Father would guide us.

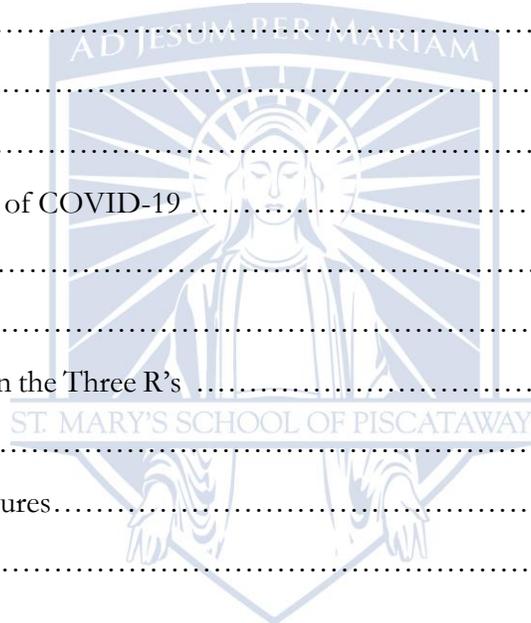
We wish to thank the members of the Reopening Task Force who dedicated their time and talents to this very important endeavor. Their unwavering support and valuable expertise in their respective fields contributed greatly to the creation of this opening plan.

The following is a detailed overview of our reopening plan which will be carried out in 4 stages.

Thank you for your continued support and faith in our mission. You remain in our prayers always.

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STAGE 1 – VIRTUAL LEARNING

- Grades PK through 8 students begin online for at-home distance learning
- Midday break for lunch
- Engaging lessons designed to foster student participation
- Virtual Extracurricular activities

STAGE 2 – TWO-DAY HYBRID LEARNING

- Pre-K children will attend school from 8 am to 12 pm
 - Group A (Monday and Tuesday); Group B (Thursday and Friday)
- Grades K -8 will begin classes on a hybrid model
- Children will conduct learning in school via a device 2 days per week and live virtual classes 3 days at home.
- Class sizes will be limited to 6 students per class with the exception of PK and 8th grade
- In person instruction will take place on Tuesdays & Thursdays
 - Students will still conduct class via a device as they would at home
- Virtual learning will occur on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays.

STAGE 3 – FOUR-DAY HYBRID LEARNING

- All grades present 4 days per week
- Will receive in-person direct instruction Monday, Tuesday, Thursday & Friday
- At-home distance learning on Wednesdays
- Teachers remain available and will have regular office hours

STAGE 4 – IN-SCHOOL DIRECT INSTRUCTION

- All grades present in school 5 days
- At this point, the majority of restrictions will have been lifted and in-person instruction will be provided to all students Monday – Friday

OVERVIEW - STAGE 2 – TWO-DAY HYBRID PLAN

SAFETY FIRST

What are we doing to ensure a safe, healthy campus environment?

Our priority is to provide a campus environment that is healthy and safe for all members of the St. Mary's School of Piscataway community. To that end, we will implement the following:

- Screening program developed in collaboration with our delegating school nurse and other health experts in our community.
- Signage encouraging physical distancing and proper hand hygiene practices displayed prominently throughout the building

- Designated space for isolation of students, faculty or staff with possible symptoms of COVID-19 until they can safely leave campus.
- School-wide policy on expected behaviors related to COVID-19 for all members of the SMSP community.
- Face covering and physical distancing requirements
- Regular cleaning and disinfection of high touch surfaces
- Additional PPE to be provided to faculty and staff who meet with students in person
- Enhanced cleaning protocols, aligning with current CDC guidance
- Health screening and self-monitoring
- Virtual COVID-19 awareness and safety training programs for all members of the SMSP community
- Students will be reminded to wash hands often and thoroughly
- Breaks will be implemented so students will have dedicated times for hand washing and hygiene practices
- Children at higher risk are encouraged to remain home for distance learning.
- Daily screenings will be submitted via Google Forms daily by 7:30 am.
- Employees will be encouraged to check their temperatures before leaving home and will be checked again upon arrival. They will be encouraged to self-monitor throughout the day.
- Suspected cases will be isolated in a designated area. Parents will be notified to pick up immediately through a separate entrance. We will follow the suggested guidelines given by the CSO in the Reopening Guidelines document.
- Appropriately fitting facial coverings (masks) will be required of all faculty and staff and all children.
 - Mask guidance from the CDC <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/your-health/effective-masks.html>
- Teachers will be responsible for constant cleaning of all touched surfaces. Classrooms will be disinfected whenever children are not present.
- Teachers will wipe down surfaces often to maintain cleanliness throughout the day.
- Children will have the opportunity to go out and get fresh air during the school day. They will play independently and will be distanced from other students.
- Playground equipment will not be used for students in grades K-8. PK students will use their play equipment.
- All water dispensers will not be available for use.

- Children must bring their own water bottles daily
- Lunches and snacks will be eaten in the classrooms. When weather permits, students will eat outside. Teachers will schedule their lunches and snacks as usual within their daily schedules.
- There will be no hot lunch served. All lunches must be brought from home. Items sent in for lunch should be items that students can open independently without assistance. Lunches will not be heated up for students.
- Desks and all frequently used classroom surfaces (tables, chairs, doorknobs, shelving units, cubbies, etc.) will be wiped/sanitized when the teachers arrive in the morning and again at the end of the day.
- Toys and other frequently touched items will be cleaned with soap and water and then disinfected with a diluted bleach solution.
- Disinfectant wipes may be used if available.
- Students must have individual supplies to use throughout the day and will remain with the students in their designated area. Supplies may not be shared with other students.
- Toys/manipulatives that cannot be sanitized such as machine washable toys, Play-Doh, sand, etc. will be removed.
- Teachers will remain with their children during student lunches. Teachers will eat lunch at a separate designated time.
- All deliveries will come to the main entrance and packages will be left at the door. Heavy packages will be brought inside and left in the foyer.
- Essential visitors will be previously scheduled and screened upon arrival. An education and training program for children and families will be given during the week prior to school opening. This will include website content, social media posts, and videos, and other methods as they are appropriate. These are designed to educate the community on best practices in relation to social distancing recommendations and all precautionary measures needed to prevent the spread of COVID-19. Training will be available to children and families through online learning platforms and email.

CAMPUS PREPARATION

What are we doing to prepare the building for our children?

We are taking several steps to deep clean and disinfect the building before the children return. The following steps are being taken to prepare the building.

- We have hired a reputable cleaning company to completely clean and sanitize the entire building at the conclusion of the day on Tuesdays and Thursdays.
- Bathrooms will be disinfected every two hours throughout the day. Alternating stalls will be used to promote distancing. Bathrooms will be sanitized each evening after school ends.

- Each classroom will have at least two open windows to promote ventilation. Each classroom with ceiling fans will have them switched to pull air up instead of pushing air down.
- Furniture will be minimized and strategically placed to accommodate appropriate distancing of children within each classroom.

TEACHER PREPARATION

What have the teachers been doing all year to prepare?

We have all been working very hard to prepare for our reunion. Teachers have been researching new and exciting ways to bring lessons to the children which will prove interesting and engaging. Once distance learning became a real possibility for the beginning of the new school year, all teachers began to plan ways to improve upon our virtual learning efforts of this past Spring. As quickly and effectively as we were able to adapt to a new way of teaching, we all understand that with time and planning, there is tremendous opportunity for improvement. That is exactly what our teachers have been devoting a significant amount of time to doing.

Teachers have been attending virtual learning webinars, technology training and have done individual research in efforts to identify new technology and programs to assist them in bringing their lessons to life. We are focusing on creating an engaging environment which will inspire the children to be excited about learning. The teachers are developing projects designed for problem solving and critical thinking. Supplementary technology programs are being procured so children will have various ways in which to practice their lessons, thus leaving little room for boredom and even eliminating the need for burdensome amounts of homework.

DISTANCE LEARNING

Will distance learning change for students whose parents opt for them to remain learning at home?

Distance learning will continue as it has throughout the first three quarters of the 2020-2021 school year. We will continue to use the published schedule, which was designed to limit screen time, maximize student engagement and minimize the need for an abundance of homework. But the daily schedule will be such that there will be time to complete practice exercises and confer with teachers during the school day, thus limiting the need for a great deal of homework. Projects for lesson reinforcement will be assigned.

Efforts will be made to ensure everyone can get connected. If you have a technological need, please contact the Main Office. We will do our best to make sure all students are able to participate in distance learning. We do not want the lack of technology to be a deterrent if we can help.

All distance learning classes will continue to be mandatory, and children must log in on time each day. Attendance will be taken in Rediker for each class. The teachers will be noting attendance for tardy arrivals. School policy on absences and tardiness will apply as usual. Parents must contact the Main Office as well as the teacher when children will be absent from virtual classes.

Children must wear their school uniforms even when attending school online.

IN THE BUILDING

What happens once children are in the building during Phase 2?

The following procedures will be in place to ensure safe and proper use of our building and allow for social distancing guidelines to be enforced.

- Daily hours will be shortened, and children will attend in-school classes two days (Tuesdays and Thursdays).
- Cafeteria / Parish Hall will be considered for additional classroom space for purposes of social distancing should enrollment dictate the necessity. Eighth grade will be learning in the Parish Hall to accommodate all learners.
- Dropoff and pick up will occur at staggered entrances around the school building:
 - Students in grades 4-8 will enter via the side door by the Parish Hall
 - Students in grades K-3 will enter via the main entrance
 - Students in PK will enter via the PK door
- Families with multiple children will be dismissed together.
- The additional room next to the Parish Hall and the Resource room will be modified to serve as designated isolation areas for suspected illnesses.
- Signs will be displayed in order to promote health and hygiene practices as well as serve to remind students to maintain safe distances.

IN CASE OF A SUSPECTED CASE OF COVID-19

What happens if a case is suspected or if someone tests positive for COVID-19?

In the event there is a suspected case of COVID-19 in the building, the following steps will be taken immediately:

- The individual will be isolated immediately to the established isolation space, and arrangements made for them to leave the premises with the recommendation to contact their healthcare provider.
- Surfaces in their workspace/classroom will be cleaned and disinfected.
- The faculty & staff will wear PPE, for care of ill staff or students.
- If not masked, the ill individual will be masked immediately
- A family member will be contacted for immediate pick up, the time of call will be noted so the length of school nurse/designee exposure is captured.
 - When contacted, parents/guardians have 60 minutes from the time of notification to either pick up or have their student picked up. If the parent/guardian cannot pick the child up within 60 minutes, individuals listed on the emergency contacts should be contacted.

- School staff will call the parent/guardian/emergency contact 30 minutes after the initial notification to obtain an updated arrival time. If the child has not been picked up after 45 minutes, a second call will be placed to the parent/guardian/emergency contact.
- The family member will be encouraged to contact a physician or other healthcare provider for more thorough COVID-19 screening and possible COVID-19 testing.
 - Per NASN, schools and ELCs are not expected to screen students or staff to identify cases of COVID-19. If a school has cases of COVID-19, local health officials will help identify those individuals and will follow up on next steps.
- We will begin preliminary tracing and additional documentation for that child/staff member, ensuring that additional signs and symptoms are discussed and captured.
 - Documentation will be necessary and vital in this stage in order to begin contact tracing that will assist local health departments in their efforts to understand the spread of COVID-19.
- Those at the facility with close contact (within 6 feet) of the child or adult during this time would be considered exposed and should leave the premises and follow the exposure protocols established by the health department.
- Once the child has been picked up from the health room, the area will be disinfected according to CDC and NASN recommendations.
- We will follow up with family or staff members to ask about pending tests.
- Local health officials will be notified.
 - These officials will help us determine a course of action for our school.
- Per the CDC, we will dismiss students and most staff for 2-5 days. This initial short-term dismissal allows time for the local health officials to gain a better understanding of the COVID-19 situation impacting the school/program and for custodial staff to clean and disinfect the affected facilities.
- We will work with the local health officials to determine appropriate next steps, including whether extended dismissal duration is needed to stop or slow further spread of COVID-19.
- If necessary, the class/teacher(s) most in contact with the infected individual will be quarantined and more extensive measures will be taken such as closure of the school building for thorough cleaning and disinfecting.
- Please use this link to visit the CDC travel advisory site: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/travelers/index.html> for information on travel.

CATHOLIC IDENTITY

As a community of faith, Christ is at the heart of all that we do. It is our mission to continue celebrating the sacraments regularly and fostering a vivid and robust prayer life for all of our students. To that end, the following will take place:

- Children will attend Mass weekly as usual.
- Masses will be live streamed every Wednesday.
- Morning Prayer will be sent each morning via email
- All children and faculty are expected to join in during prayer times.
- Each teacher is encouraged to pray with the children at the beginning of each class in order to align with normal operating procedures.

OUR DAILY SCHEDULE

What will the day look like?

Every effort will be made to keep the schedule we have used all year consistent.

Prompt attendance in virtual classes is required. Attendance will be taken and recorded in Rediker as usual.

All communications will be hosted by Google Classroom. All classes will be hosted by Google Meet.

Schedules are located on the school website, as well as shared on Google Drive with individual students and families.

BECAUSE SCHOOL IS MORE THAN THE THREE R's

How are the social and emotional needs of students supported?

We at St. Mary's School of Piscataway are very concerned with the well-being of our students, both physically and emotionally. We understand it is important they still have time to play and be children. This includes being able to visit with each other in a non-academic setting that just allows them to be themselves and see their friends.

In order to facilitate these moments, we will continue to offer times for students to play virtually. This could be in the form of: lunch bunch, game time, free play, club, etc. This is time for the children to gather with their friends and play games, share thoughts, pray, watch movies and just be children.

DRESS CODE

Our dress code, even in the virtual setting, is founded on the belief that uniforms decrease distractions, simplify the morning routine, increase respect for each student, and prepare students for success by teaching professional dress expectations. By wearing the uniform in the virtual world, students will affirm the mindset of learning.

All children will be required to wear either their full school uniform, outlined in the Parent and Student Handbook, when returning to in person learning. While in distance learning, students are not required to wear the uniform pants, jumper or skirt. All uniform pieces are available at Carousel in Waldorf, Maryland.

Face coverings are to be worn as part of the uniform. Gaitors (stretchy material worn around the neck), fleece masks and bandanas are prohibited. Acceptable masks should be N-95, standard surgical, or layered cotton.

SCHOOL ENTRY AND EXIT PROCEDURES (STAGE 2)

- All children entering the building will be screened at the entrance. The following procedures will take place before children are permitted to enter the building.
- Temperatures will be taken at the entrance of the building.
- Parents will sign complete a screening form each morning before 7:30 am via Google Form. PK parents will have an additional verbal questionnaire to complete.
- Masks are required for all children entering the building. Face shields are required for PK students.
- Students in grades K-3 will enter through the main entrance and go directly to their classroom. Students in grades 4-8 will enter through the side entrance by the Parish Hall. Students in PK will enter through their classroom door.
- There will be no gathering in the foyer, and students in grades 6-8 will not be permitted to use their lockers.
- Late arrivals must be escorted to the front entrance, ring the doorbell and go through the screening process before being permitted to enter.
- Parents must remain with their children until they are admitted into the building.
- Children exhibiting a fever of 100.3 or higher will not be permitted to leave the vehicle and parents will be asked to return home.
- Children may not return to school unless free of fever for 72 hours without the aid of fever reducing medication.
- Parents are asked to closely monitor children for any symptoms and make the decision to keep the child home should signs of illness present.

The following are exit procedures which will be in place at dismissal.

- Pre-Kindergarten children will be dismissed at 12:00 pm.
- Parents will pull up to their assigned pick-up zone and wait in their vehicle. St. Mary's will provide a placard sign for you to display upon arrival on your dashboard.
- The children will be called from the classroom in the order by which the cars are present.
- This is a single file operation. Only cars located in the pick-up lane will have students dismissed out to their cars. The right lane will be used as a through lane. Please be aware while driving around campus. Please be sure to follow all guidance from the attendants.

COMMUNICATION

We continue to use Google Classroom as a school-wide learning and communication platform. All communication between school and families will take place via Google Classroom and email.

Children and parents have received training on new technology prior to the start of classes.

Our main form of communication will continue to be email. Please check the email you provided daily for updates and announcements.

The weekly newsletter will continue to be distributed via email every Friday.

ACADEMICS

St. Mary's School of Piscataway remains dedicated to providing the superior standard of education which has characterized our school for almost 60 years. Despite these very unusual times, we are certainly going to continue that tradition.

In addition to our very talented and educated faculty, we have a Resource teacher who is dedicated to working with each child with an ICEP or CAP plan to ensure their needs are being met. She will also meet with all teachers to ensure best practices for differentiated learning and assessment are in place. We are committed to meeting all children where they are and working to bring them to their highest potential.

- Teachers will include information related to the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) as it relates to social justice, current events, core subjects, and health and safety practices.
- Teachers will continue to hold students to the highest standard of excellence expected at St. Mary's School of Piscataway while maintaining fair and equitable methodologies for teaching and grading.

ASSESSMENT

- Scantron testing will take place in person in September for students in grades 2-8. Testing will take place virtually in the winter, and in person in the spring. Special allowances will be made for students whose parents are uncomfortable with them returning in person.
- A maximum number of children will be permitted in each session to facilitate social distancing.
- Parents will not be permitted to enter the building at any time but will be asked to remain in the parking lot to be available when their student has completed the test.

ONWARD TOGETHER IN FAITH

We are all together on this Journey.

This plan, while designed with many factors in consideration, may not be what you might have expected, and it may even pose some inconveniences for your family and circumstances. For this we apologize. However, everything we have detailed herein has been developed with you, our precious families, in mind. Our school's very existence depends on your support and your collaboration and we need and want you with us on this Journey.

Our plan is not only to weather the storm that is this Global Pandemic, but to conquer it and flourish despite the hardships we now face. This is our chance to rewrite our future; to grow our community and emerge bigger and stronger than ever before. We can only accomplish this goal with your help. So please continue to trust us, hang with us, volunteer to work with us, and pray for us as we, the community of St. Mary's School of Piscataway, forge Onward Together in Faith.

May God bless you and may He bless St. Mary's School of Piscataway.

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