

June 12, 2020

Dear Parents,

The school year 2019-2020 has officially ended. What an unusual last few months! As part of your request for frequent updates, I want to share with you what we are doing to prepare for the new school year. As you know, the Diocese is planning on beginning the 2020-2021 school year on August 19th with face-to-face instruction.

The teachers met on Wednesday, June 10th to go over the recommendations listed in the Tool Kit. On June 11th many teachers and I attended a Zoom with members of the Task Force. We are making efforts to comply with the recommendations to keep students and teachers as safe as possible. We are partnering with the WS/FCS, through the Cares ACT, to obtain some of the necessary sanitation supplies and equipment (i.e. Plexiglass, thermometers, devices for technology, and professional development). We are waiting for further details from WS/FCS.

Updating faucets for the bathrooms is a top priority for proper hand washing. It is recommended that masks be worn and that children stay in their homerooms, while “Specials” teachers come into their rooms to teach the children in each grade. As of now, it is recommended that children eat in their classrooms. Students will be able to play on the soccer field during recess and P.E. in smaller groups.

When students exit their cars in the morning a staff member will quickly scan their temperature with a non-contact forehead thermometer. If they do not have a fever, they will go directly to their classrooms. If they do have a fever, they will be sent back to the car for parents to take the appropriate measures. Students must be 24-hours free of a temperature before being allowed back in school. Please be sure you have someone available to pick up your child from school if they are sick, have a fever or exhibit symptoms of Covid-19.

Children will go directly to their homeroom and, except for outdoor recess or P.E., will remain there most of the day. Bathroom times will be planned to avoid too many students in the bathroom at once. All teachers will review proper handwashing procedures.

Dismissal will look much the same for Pre-K through 5th grade. Dismissal for our Middle School students and those with younger siblings may change a little or take a bit longer. We are working out the logistics.

After School Care, depending on the number of students, will be divided into smaller groups. Younger students will need to bring their own toy to play with. Weather permitting, there will be some outdoor time.

The teachers have met as a large group and then again in departments: primary, intermediate, and middle school. They have identified both successes and areas that

need to be improved should remote teaching be needed at any point in the future. I think you can be proud of the hard work the teachers have done and are willing to do to ensure your children receive the quality education you have come to expect from Our Lady of Mercy. Here are some of the things that teachers have discussed and will put into place:

1. To provide consistency, all teachers will use the Google Classroom platform.
2. Teachers will look for and participate in training over the summer to effectively use Google Classroom, Google Meet, and learn best practices for distance teaching.
3. With the help of the technology teachers, when school begins in August, classroom teachers will instruct students on how to use Google Classroom, specifically how to find assignments, how to ask questions, and how to access teacher comments on assignments.
4. Teachers will use Google Classroom as an information and homework tool throughout the school year so that students and parents are familiar with this platform making the transition to remote learning easier, should that become necessary at some point.

In addition, teachers are committed to:

- Providing more Google Meet opportunities (with dress codes and behavior requirements)
- Taking daily attendance based on students' online presence
- Having consistent due dates for assignments
- Providing regular communication with parents via email

In order to comply with Protecting God's Children requirements, teachers will not be able to provide one-on-one online meetings with students but are brainstorming ways to provide opportunities for students to get answers to questions in a timely manner.

Because a number of students must share devices, teachers are working to find ways to coordinate and share Google Meet times among grades and classes so that as many students as possible will be able to participate.

According to The Strong Schools NC Public Health Tool Kit (K-12), any student affected by Covid-19 may be homebound for 10-14 days. Teachers are also working to find ways to accommodate these students with instruction while quarantined at home.

As you can see, a lot of work has happened and will continue to happen before the new school year begins. This work is difficult as CDC guidelines and requirements change frequently. More information from the Governor's office is expected to come out on July 1, 2020 which may also change plans.

Please know that we are all working very hard for you and your children. We appreciate your prayers and support during this challenging time. We depend on your commitment to Catholic education to assure that OLM continues to provide a living, family environment. We're all in this together. We're a part of the heart of Mercy!

Fondly,

Sr. Geri Rogers, SSJ

Principal