



St. Mary of the Lakes School Return to School Overview- July 2020

July 24, 2020

Dear St. Mary of the Lakes School Families,

Considering how to reopen our school safely has been complex and challenging. We are tasked with determining how to safely provide the best academic setting for our students given the constraints of the current health crisis and evolving information. With safety as our priority, we used all the current guidelines and information available to develop options for our families.

What is outlined below is an overview, but not our complete plan. We are developing a more comprehensive document that addresses detailed logistics for arrival, dismissal, lunch, recess, bathroom use, illness in the building and more. We continue to add to and refine this plan and will make it available as soon as possible.

It is also important to note that local or state directives may change between now (late July) and the start of school. As a school, we recognize the need to be prepared to pivot to a different plan if guidance changes and requires us to do so.

Based on the current safety guidelines and following the specifications below, St. Mary of the Lakes School will plan to open on September 8 (September 9 for K and PreK) by offering a full time on campus program. Through changes to our staffing plan and reallocating classroom space, we are able to put all the necessary safety measures in place so we can provide our academic program to students on campus.

We recognize that some families do not feel comfortable with a return to campus at this time, and we are developing a fully remote option to accommodate these families. Please note that the fully remote option involves a commitment of being fully remote through the first half of the school year (end of January) with the opportunity to extend if the pandemic conditions still exist.

Some noteworthy specifications (additional details are in the forthcoming full plan):

- Because the number of students in each grade varies, different grades need different accommodations to keep everyone safe. Due to class size, Kindergarten and 1st grade students will be grouped into smaller and separate cohorts on campus to ensure safety and distancing. Rising 5th graders will become two separate homeroom groups and 6th-8th grade will remain as two separate homerooms per grade. The enrollment in all grades is being limited to ensure safe group size.
- Students will need to wear facial coverings during arrival, dismissal, while moving through the hallways, while in the bathroom and any time social distancing isn't possible. Current guidelines allow for the removal of student facial coverings if desks are spaced appropriately and/or barriers are in place, which we plan to do and have.
- Staff will be required to wear facial coverings at all times during the day. Visitors will have limited access to the building and any visitors will need to wear masks.
- Students will eat lunch in their classrooms at the start of the school year with the goal of returning to the cafeteria for lunch as soon as possible.
- Recess will be offered outside (weather permitting) in a modified format to allow for social distancing and limited or no sharing of equipment.
- Extra curricular activities will be evaluated on a case by case basis to determine if safe.
- The first week of school was scheduled to have two early dismissals and two full days. The week will now be early dismissals all week (12:40pm) so we can help the students learn all the new procedures without navigating lunch and so the teachers have time for additional training after the students dismiss.

We can offer an in-school option because we are a small school community. In order to maintain a safe environment, we will be setting limits on capacity in each classroom, and some classes are already at or close to their limit. If your student(s) was enrolled at SMLS last year but you have not re-enrolled for 20-21 and you wish to do so, please contact the Admissions office right away.

So we can plan appropriately, [please use this survey to inform us](#) of your preference for September or if you would like to be contacted by our Admissions office. Please complete this survey by July 31.

Preschool

In preschool, we have the physical space and existing teaching staff to offer our full preschool program with limited enrollment. The students will be divided into two cohorts per classroom per day to limit contact with other students and materials. We will also be providing for social distancing whenever possible and more frequent washing of hands and equipment. Preschool students will need to wear facial coverings upon arrival and dismissal and have a

facial covering available for times when social distancing or using protective barriers is not possible.

Before and After Care

Before and After Care will continue to be offered. These programs will follow the same safety guidelines for distancing and frequent sanitizing.

Summer Travel Plans

As you are aware, New Jersey currently has restrictions in place for those who enter New Jersey after travel to certain locations. If your end of summer plans take you to a destination that will require you to quarantine upon your return, please notify the school and plan to quarantine at home before returning to school.

Transportation

Private bus companies and public schools are experiencing challenges meeting the new requirements for social distancing and disinfecting on their existing routes so they are hesitant to commit to additional runs for nonpublic students. It is likely that we will not get a bus company to pick up our routes. As of the sending of this email, the school has not been informed about the results of our bus bids, but some families have received postal mail saying they won't receive a bus. Eligible students who are not provided a bus have historically received aid in lieu of transportation (AIL). The state has not released the amount of AIL per pupil for 20-21 but the amount was \$1000/pupil in 19-20.

I appreciate all the efforts of our Pastor, our Reopening Task Force, and School Board who are committed to making the most of this challenging time. We continue to pray for our local and global community and for health as we begin a new school year.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Amy M. Rash". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Amy M. Rash
Principal