

St. Mary of the Lakes School



Return to School Plan 2020-2021

****Last updated 8/21/2020; future additions
and revisions expected****

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Understandings and Guiding Principles

The global spread of Covid-19 has forced schools and communities to make challenging decisions that affect the teaching and learning process. The list below outlines some of the current realities that guide our next steps as we plan for the 20-21 school year.

- The health conditions that contribute to safe school learning environments are changing daily.
- Guidance from governing bodies changes as new information emerges.
- The guidelines presented to schools are offered to mitigate risk but cannot guarantee staff or students' safety.
- Plans to return to school need to be flexible and adaptable depending on the levels of viral transmission in our community at any given time.
- Plans need to consider students' developmental stages and abilities as well as the existing resources, including physical space and staffing.
- Priorities for reopening schools can vary across constituent groups.
- Many constituents have strong and passionate feelings about the reopening of schools but no one model will be the ideal fit for every family.
- Many, many, many more logistics will need to be addressed than are listed in this document. This is a starting point for addressing some of the main areas of need. This document will continue to grow and evolve as more guidance is provided.

Sources Considered

- [The Road Back: Restart and Recovery Plan for Education](#)
- [CDC Guidance](#)
- [American Academy of Pediatrics](#)
- [Leading With Hope](#)

NJ Department of Health Risk Matrix

[Guidance provided by the NJ Department of Health](#) helps local Boards of Health assess a community's risk when providing guidance to schools.

Procedures for Promoting Health

Social Distancing, Protective Supplies and Face Coverings

At all times possible, students will be spaced 6 or more feet from other students and staff members. Non-necessary furniture will be removed from classrooms to allow space for students and student desks. Clear barriers on student desks will be used as an extra layer of protection in addition to spacing. Limiting class size in each homeroom will allow for safer queues and transitions. Markings on the floor will serve as guides so students can distance appropriately when lining up and moving.

On August 3, the NJ Department of Education released an update to their original guidance, [The Road Back: Restart and Recovery Plan for Education](#). Originally, the document said that students were strongly encouraged to wear face coverings and were only required to do so when social distancing could not be maintained. Now, the updated guidance provided on 8/3 states that students are required to wear a face covering at all times when in school except:

- When the student is in extreme heat outdoors
- During the period that a student is eating or drinking
- When the student is engaged in high intensity aerobic or anaerobic activity

[The updated guidance does recommend that students and staff be “provided face covering breaks throughout the day”](#) when students are able to be distanced from each other, ideally outside. Teachers will look for opportunities to provide face covering breaks whenever safely possible following this guidance. The guidance can be found by clicking the link above, on page 3, 4th bullet point from the top.

Specifics About Face Coverings

- Students should wear their own face coverings that they find comfortable and that can easily be taken on and off (when allowed).
- Students may choose to attach lanyards or mask extenders to their face covering that allow students to drape the face covering around the neck when not in use.
- Accessories like large chains that are for fashion purposes will not be allowed.
- There is no guidance on neck gaiters at this time; because they are a face covering, we will allow them until we receive further clarification saying we cannot (see below for additional information about what is known about face covering requirements).
- All designs on face coverings should be school appropriate for school and should not have images of anything that would be considered inappropriate for school (ie Fortnite). Patterns and prints including sports teams are acceptable. The main priority is that face coverings fit comfortably so they can serve their purpose.

- The NJ Department of Education has clarified on 8/3/20 that face shields cannot be used alone, but can be used in addition to a cloth face covering.
- If a student or staff forgets their cloth face covering, SMLS will provide disposable face covering for single day use.
- Students and staff should wash their face covering each day after school or have a different clean face covering to wear each day.
- School staff and visitors are required to wear face coverings in the school.
- See above for information about “face covering breaks”.

If it is deemed necessary that a child’s well-being is compromised in wearing a mask, a doctor’s note is to be provided to the principal followed by a conference between the student’s parents and principal during which a determination will be made if it would be more beneficial or necessary for the child to receive virtual instruction.

Limiting Contact With Groups and Supplies

Students will use their own personal supplies whenever possible. Students will have individual technology so they will not need to share. Special area teachers will come to the students’ classroom to minimize transition time and risk from unnecessary travel throughout the building. If there is a situation where supplies need to be shared among students, the teacher will facilitate the sanitizing of the supplies before they are shared.

Students in all grade levels will wear their gym clothes to school on their scheduled gym days. Locker rooms will not be used for changing clothes.

Kindergarten-4th grade student desk spaces will be wiped and sanitized periodically throughout the day, specifically before and after eating. Middle school students will switch classes at points during the school day and their desks will be sanitized at each switch. Students will enter the new classroom wearing their face coverings, as required, and remain standing in designated spots. The teacher will thoroughly spray each student desk and shield. Students will use a disposable paper towel to wipe their desk and shield before sitting. (Disinfecting wipes are difficult to find at this time.) Students may use their own hand sanitizer or the school’s sanitizer at this point or any reasonable time to sanitize their hands.

Visitors to the Building, Late Student Drop Off, Early Pick Up

Visitors will have limited or no access to the building. Any visitor who has been approved by the Principal to enter the building will undergo a temperature and health screening.

If a student is dropped off late, parents will sign the student in on the clip board in the vestibule. The parent will ring the doorbell in the vestibule for the child to be granted access to the

building. The child will come to the main office door and undergo a temperature check and will then go to class. The parent may not enter the building.

For early pick up of healthy children, the parent will sign the child out in the vestibule of the main office entrance and wait in the vestibule for the child to be called down.

Handwashing and Sanitizing

SMLS uses EPA approved products to disinfect and will increase the frequency of disinfecting high touch areas throughout the day. Students will wash hands after using the restroom and before and after eating. Handwashing is preferable but if handwashing isn't possible, hand sanitizer will be provided to students. Signage will be posted reminding students to wash hands for 20 seconds and to sanitize often.

Screenings to Prevent Illness

Parents will be asked to complete an electronic form daily that provides assurance that the child does not have a fever and has not been in contact with anyone with Covid-19. The school will also use contactless thermometers to provide an additional screening of the students upon arrival at school and periodically throughout the day. Staff members will also complete a daily health screening and may have periodic temperature checks to be sure that they are symptom free.

St. Mary of the Lakes School will not allow students or staff who have a temperature of 100.0° F or higher to be on campus. A fever of this level is enough to signal that an illness may be present and allows early action rather than waiting for a higher temperature to develop. If a student or staff member registers a temperature at school and there is another possible explanation for the temperature (like extreme heat or outdoor activity), the temperature will be retaken after a cooling off period and with a different thermometer to confirm the reading.

Students may suffer from conditions like asthma or seasonal allergies whose symptoms may be similar to those of Covid-19 (ie runny nose, cough, or difficulty breathing). A conversation with the principal and school nurse as well as documentation from a doctor may be needed if symptoms of these conditions are presenting as Covid-19 symptoms.

SMLS will also be screening for students or staff who may have traveled to areas that require quarantine upon return to New Jersey. Please see the "Travel Outside of New Jersey" section for more information.

Illness on Campus

Any student or staff member who has symptoms of Covid-19 while on campus will be taken to a designated room that is separate from the nurse's office to avoid spreading germs to students

who are in the nurse's office for non-Covid reasons. Parents who are picking up a child who has Covid symptoms will be given directions about where to pick up the child when they are contacted by the school about their child being sick. If the school becomes aware of any community member who tests positive for Covid-19, SMLS will follow the current guidelines for Communicable Disease reporting and will begin the process of contact tracing (see below).

Staff and students will be required to stay home from school if they show one or more of these symptoms that are not explained by causes other than possible Covid-19 infection:

- A fever of 100.0° F or greater
- Cough
- Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing
- Chills
- Repeated shaking with chills
- Muscle pain
- Headache
- Sore throat
- New loss of taste or smell
- Fatigue
- Congestion or runny nose
- Nausea or vomiting
- Diarrhea

If an infected person has been in the school building, it is likely that a short term closure of the building will be required. The school will consult with the local board of health to determine the need for and length of the closure. Information will be communicated about the closure and the Covid-19 exposure, with careful consideration given to confidentiality and rights protected under FERPA (Family Education Rights and Privacy Act). See additional details under contact tracing below. The school will be thoroughly disinfected using EPA approved products and disinfecting procedures.

In the event that the school would need to close due to an exposure to Covid-19 on campus, plans for fully remote instruction would be implemented for the duration of the closure. Students who are ill would not attend remote classes while ill. If staff are ill, a substitute or other staff member would take over remote instruction until the teacher is healthy.

Students who are home due to Covid-19 or any other documented long term illness may participate in remote instruction while they are home recovering or quarantining, as long as they are well enough to do so.

Contact Tracing

Contact tracing is the long standing practice used to identify those who have come in contact with those who have tested positive for contagious diseases. It is an important step in keeping communities, especially schools, safe from the spread of infectious diseases.

Contact tracing at SMLS will be implemented if the school becomes aware that a staff or student tested positive for Covid-19. There may be other scenarios that would warrant contact tracing and those will be determined in collaboration between the school and local board of health. SMLS will work closely with the local board of health in any situation where an infection of a school community member is suspected or confirmed.

Contact tracing requires compliance with all federal and state regulations about privacy and confidentiality. It is important that those infected with Covid-19 or suspected of infection be treated with respect and confidentiality. Information will be provided to those contacts identified by the school and the local board of health. This could include immediate classroom contacts or the entire school, depending on where the student or staff member has been in the school and other details pertinent to each unique situation.

Teachers will keep accurate daily records of attendance and schedules so that the contact tracing process can be efficient and effective.

Readmittance to Campus after an Illness

Staff and students who were infected with Covid-19 will be able to return to campus after the school principal and local board of health agree that it is safe. The [current guidance](#) provides these recommendations which will be considered by the principal and board of health:

- Symptom-based strategy
 - Individuals can stop isolating at home after at least 10 days have passed since symptoms first appeared (20 days for severe or critical cases)
- Time-based strategy
 - Asymptomatic persons can stop isolating after at least 10 days have passed since the date of their first positive Covid-19 test

Additionally, [the Covid-19 Exclusion Table provided by the NJ Department of Health](#) will guide the decision-making process.

Learning Models

Due to the uncertainty of the upcoming weeks and months, it is critical to prepare for several possible scenarios and be ready to make a fluid transition.

Details

Fully On Campus Option

SMLS will open the 20-21 school year with students on campus and attending school daily. Class sizes will be limited so safety measures like distancing can be implemented. Safety modifications include:

- Students will remain in the classroom for special area classes to reduce the amount of hallway travel and transitions throughout the school day. The exception is gym class, where students will be taken outside for gym class as often as possible. The gymnasium may be used for distanced physical activity when the weather doesn't allow for outside class.
- Students and staff will be required to wear face coverings (see section above for details as NJ guidance was updated on 8/3/20) and visitors will have limited or no access to the building.
- Students will eat lunch in their classrooms at the start of the school year with the goal of returning to the lunchroom when 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.

****As indicated in the previous version, teachers will need one early dismissal day per week to accommodate their remote learners. The early dismissal day will be Wednesday of each week and dismissal will be at 12:40pm for K-8. This does not apply to preschool.**

Fully Remote Option

Families may not feel comfortable sending their child to school at this time. SMLS will offer a fully remote program of study for these students so they can stay on pace with what their classmates are learning in the classroom with the goal of returning to SMLS in the future. However, selecting a fully remote option does require a commitment to remain remote through the first half of the school year (end of January) at which time the current health situation will be reevaluated.

The fully remote option will be offered at the same time that teachers are teaching full time students on campus. Therefore, the fully remote option will not operate in the same way it would if everyone is remote (as described below). Teachers will provide curricular materials, pacing, and directions for students at home.

Please see [this separate document](#) for information about the remote plan and the specific middle school schedule of remote instruction.

Fully Remote If Required (due to government mandate or illness on campus)

It is possible, if not likely, that some classes or the entire school will be required to switch to fully remote instruction due to an executive order or an occurrence of the virus in our community. To be prepared:

- All K-8 students will be issued a school device to be used at school. The device and charger will be sent home if remote instruction is required.
- All K-8 students will be assigned a SMLS Google account which will provide access to Google applications like Google Meet, Google Classroom, Docs and more. Students who have not used the Google platform will practice using these applications during the first days and weeks of school in order to be prepared for remote instruction and to increase their digital skills.
- Students in K-4 will meet daily with their teacher for live virtual instruction with their full class and/or in small groups. They will also have live daily asynchronous instruction (assignments and learning resources provided for learning to take place while they are not in a live lesson with their teacher).
- Students in grades 5-8 will have live virtual instruction in each core content class a minimum of 2-3 times per week. This schedule is being prepared in case remote instruction is needed. In addition to live instruction, asynchronous work (assignments, learning resources, and teacher feedback) will be provided.

Preschool

In preschool, we have the physical space and existing teaching staff to offer our regular preschool program but with limited enrollment and additional safety modifications. 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 face coverings upon arrival and dismissal and have a facial covering available for times when social distancing or using protective barriers is not possible. Staff will wear face coverings throughout the day.

Technology

Each student in grades K-8 will be loaned a school device for his/her use. Students will not share devices. If the fully remote model is needed at any point in time, the device will be sent home with the students for remote instruction. All students in grades K-8 will have a SMLS Google account. Students who choose the fully remote option will be assigned a school device to take home for the duration of the remote instruction.

Learning Supports

The Educational Services Unit of Burlington County (ESU) provides compensatory services and special education services for our students. ESU will continue to provide staff members who are in our building part time to support students in small groups. The ESU staff will follow all building protocols including temperature checks, wearing face coverings, providing for distance between students in small groups, providing distance between the teacher and student(s), and sanitizing work spaces.

Other Logistics

Snack, Lunch, and Recess

To begin the year, students will eat lunch in their classrooms while all the new procedures and logistics are learned and refined. The goal is to return the students to the cafeteria after the first few weeks of school. Students will wash hands before eating and either wash or use hand sanitizer after eating. As always, students will not be allowed to share food, utensils, or other items.

Medford Schools typically provided a hot lunch option for our students, but is not able to provide lunch service at this time. Parents should plan to pack lunch for their child(ren) until such time that a hot lunch program can be reinstated. Any requirements due to food allergies will be communicated so they know which foods cannot come into the classroom. Heat up service will not be able to be provided at this time.

Recess will be offered outside for all grades daily, weather permitting. Activities will be modified to include those without shared equipment where students can be spaced 6+ feet apart.

Snack time will still be provided and students will need to follow the protocols for washing and/or sanitizing hands before and after they eat and sanitizing the area in which they eat.

Teachers will be encouraged to take their students outside whenever possible and feasible. This includes snack time and potentially lunch as well.

Bathroom Access and Water Fountains

Student bathroom capacity will be limited based on the size of the bathroom. Capacity will be posted. Instead of congregating in the bathroom, students will be asked to wait outside the bathroom doors on floor markers until there is space available inside the bathroom.

Sinks, handles, stall locks, and other high touch surfaces will be frequently sanitized throughout the day.

Water fountain access will be turned off in the beginning of the year because water fountains have a frequently touched surface and because students can accidentally put their mouth on the spout. The need for closing the water fountain will be reassessed throughout the beginning of the year, but in order to stay hydrated, students should bring in water in reusable or disposable water bottles from home. Please send water only in water bottles (juice containers are still acceptable for lunches).

Bus Transportation

Medford Township Public Schools will no longer be able to provide the contracted bus services it provided for Medford students at SMLS or students from the surrounding area as it did for the last two years.

We are looking into interest from Hainesport/Lumberton families to see if there are enough students who would ride the bus to offset the cost of the bus.

If a student lives between 2 and 20 miles away from their nonpublic school and the public school is not able to provide cost effective bus services, the resident public school will pay families aid in lieu of transportation. Last year's amount was \$1000 per eligible child.

Before and after care are being provided for families who need it. Please register promptly.

Arrival and Dismissal

Students arriving in the car line should enter using either the Art Room doors (5th-8th grade) or the kitchen/auditorium doors (K-4th grade). In addition to parents' verification that students are symptom-free, student temperatures will be scanned upon entering the building using a contactless thermometer. Students should be sure to wear masks to enter the building because they may pass others in the hallway en route to class.

Student dismissal will remain the same except that students will wear masks and will spread out at least 6 feet while waiting for their car. Students will need to stand with their family/car pool group while waiting for their car.

Before and After Care

Before and After Care will continue to be offered to students who are on campus. These programs will follow the same guidelines for distancing and frequent sanitizing. Please register your child(ren) so we can plan for appropriate staffing.

*Before Care will be held in the auditorium this year because there will not be time available to sanitize a classroom in between before care and the start of the school day. The auditorium will also provide a large space where distancing can be more easily accommodated.

***Before Care and After Care will begin on the first full day of school, September 14, 2020**

- We may not be able to accept last minute drop in requests due to spacing and staffing; at least 24 hours notice is needed and we will try to accommodate the request.

Sports and Extracurricular Activities

Sports and extracurricular activities are being evaluated for the extent to which they can be held safely at this time. The company that runs our instrumental music program has decided to offer their program remotely to start the year. Other group activities will be evaluated on a case by case basis.

Travel Outside of New Jersey

As you are aware, New Jersey currently has restrictions in place for those who enter New Jersey after travel to certain locations. If a student travels to a destination that requires quarantine upon your return, please notify the school and plan to quarantine at home for the duration of time required.