

Catholic Schools Onward

Saint Monica School Pandemic Plan Best Practices and New Opportunities as We Move Forward

(Please note this is a fluid document. As current information becomes available the pages on this site will be updated.)

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Introduction:

On March 13th, the doors to our school buildings were closed for the 2019-2020 school year. Without skipping a beat, Saint Monica School began virtual learning and flexible instruction, continuing the excellence that identifies us as, “The Pride of South Philly”. Now, we look forward to reopening our school building in September. It is the time to plan, to build our community, to instill confidence, to communicate, to work together, and to set forth a positive stance that says, “Together, we WILL prevail during these challenging times. It is our faith that leads and guides us onward.

Saint Monica School has created a Pandemic Team with defined roles and responsibilities for health and safety preparedness and planning. The team has prepared this document in keeping with the CDC guidelines, the Archdiocesan Plan “Catholic Schools Onward, and the [Preliminary Guidance for Phased Reopening of Pre-K to 12 Schools](#) released in early June, 2020 by the PA Department of Education.

Given the dynamic nature of the COVID-19 pandemic, we will adjust our procedures and protocols as needed as additional guidelines are released.

Plan and Philosophy

It is absolutely imperative that our reopening plan honors the commitment and promise that St. Monica School makes to its students, families, and staff. Saint Monica School’s plan for re-opening will conform to the law and be shaped by the guidance of the government and Archdiocese, our internal decision-making process will be guided by the following foundational premises:

1. Faith Community: The mission of Saint Monica School is our basis; Grounded in Gospel values and solid academics based on Core Curriculum Standards, the Saint Monica School community challenges students to become lifelong learners and to grow into successful leaders in our Church and global community.

2. Safety: Every day we are learning how to plan to safely reopen and resume in-person instruction. Saint Monica School will continue to stay informed of the available data, updates, and evidence on maximizing educational opportunities while keeping our community healthy and safe.

3. Presence: Keeping school open daily. We do not want to burden parents with challenging schedules that require them to stay home and out of work - we want our students at school for the full day. In-person instruction and interaction between peers and teachers are vital to the educational and emotional growth and well-being of our students.

4. Growth: Despite limitations, we want our children to continue their academic progress at grade level in their faith and in all core academic standards.

Catholic Identity:

As stated in the Catholic Schools Onward Plan, “excellence in education is characterized by having a strong curriculum, student engagement, utilizing quality instructional methods, making good use of data and regular communication with parents and stakeholders.” What is at the heart of learning at Saint Monica School is the inclusion of faith and Catholic identity in all we do. A renewal of faith, hope, and charity is needed in the world, and it will come through the children who have been formed in them.

The following protocols will be implemented:

- No all school morning assembly, prayers, and pledge. This tradition will continue over the intercom system.
- Daily prayer of Pope Francis for the protection from the corona virus will be added to daily prayers. The prayer will be in each classroom prayer corner.
- Each classroom will choose a patron saint for the year.
- First Friday all school mass and other all school religious assemblies will be suspended until further notice. When students are unable to attend mass, live streaming will be made available and students will make a spiritual communion.

- Students will continue to attend monthly mass and confession with their classroom. Masks and social distancing are required.

Best Practices:

The Pennsylvania Department of Education states in its preliminary guidance plan: Recognizing that each school entity is unique and that all plans for the upcoming year must reflect local needs, each school entity must create a Health and Safety Plan which will serve as guidelines for the school reopening. It should be tailored to the unique needs of each school entity and should be created in consultation with local health agencies, if possible. Following this guidance, Saint Monica School will use the following principles:

Partnership – Catholic elementary schools are inherently a partnership between the parent and the school, the parent is the first and primary educator of their child. This is never more important than at this time and an even greater partnership is now needed. This cannot be possible unless the school and the parents agree to the importance of monitoring your child’s health on a daily basis. If a child is sick or has a fever, parents need to keep their child home until medically cleared to return to school. With parental cooperation in this matter, we will be able to keep school open and safe.

Cohorting – Cohorting is recommended by many health organizations as an environmental measure to prevent the spread of disease. Some large school systems are using it as the only method of prevention to control the spread of the COVID-19 virus. Although, Saint Monica School will be using other precautionary measures, cohorting will be a major part of the plan. The idea is to keep the classroom of children together for the entire day, five days a week. They will eat lunch together, go outside for recess together, and have classes as a cohort. If a case of COVID-19 were to surface with a cohort, we would then move to virtual learning at home with just the identified cohort. The rest of the school would continue to operate with in-class instruction.

Social distancing – Social distancing is a fundamental practice and recommendation by the CDC. Saint Monica School will implement social distancing practices throughout the day as detailed in various sections of this plan. Travel in the hallway, lunch periods, and classroom instruction have all been planned to maximize social distancing.

PPE – Personal Protection Equipment – Masks will be mandatory in certain situations, such as travel in the hallway, on the bus, classroom situations with non-cohort members, or when travel about the classroom is necessary without effective social distancing. When a child is at his desk with his cohort in a socially distance situation, the student may remove his mask. Using these principles, a student then can remain mask free for the majority of the day, unless a parent indicates they would like their child to keep their mask on the entire day. Classroom teachers will wear a face shield so students can see their face.

Cleaning – Maintaining a clean and properly sanitized facility will be a critical component to preventing COVID-19. The school will increase the cleaning of common areas and highly used features such as door knobs, handrails, and counters. Staff and students will be instructed on hygiene practices and cleaning guidelines. Guidelines for cleaning are located in a separate section of this document.

Monitoring health – Each day, parents are primarily responsible for monitoring the health of their children. Teachers will monitor their students' health throughout the day. Teachers and staff will have their temperature taken upon arrival and complete a health survey daily.

Virtual Learning – Use of both distance learning and virtual learning will continue to be available as needed. Professional Development will be provided for teachers in September to enhance and improve virtual instruction at each grade level.

Modified Attendance – Since we are encouraging parents to monitor health closely, and we encourage keeping children home if they display symptoms, the grading of attendance has changed. Children will be marked as attending in person or attending virtually. Only when children cannot or do not participate in any of the virtual lessons, will they be marked absent.

Entering the Building:

A foundational premise when designing a safe entry throughout the day and controlling transmission of any virus, is to help keep it from the building. The use of hand sanitation and social distancing is recommended by the CDC and other health agencies to help control the spread of any viruses and also manage any possible outbreaks.

The following protocols will be implemented:

- When a student arrives to school they are to be wearing a mask. Students are to have a zip lock bag to store their mask when not in use.
- Instead of entering the school, students will assemble outside. As they did inside, a teacher be assigned for morning duty. The parking lots will be marked by grade and classroom following social distancing guidelines. In the case if inclement weather, students will go directly to the classroom.
- Teachers will meet their lines outside and walk the students to the classrooms. Teachers will greet each student and ask them if they had their temperature checked at home.
- Once students enter the classroom, students use hand sanitizer and teachers review the daily monitoring health check list. See appendix.
- Those students participating in the school breakfast program will go directly to the cafeteria. All students will sanitize their hands before and after eating breakfast. Students will sit with their cohort. When the bell rings, students will move to their classrooms.

- Cafeteria will be cleaned and sanitized after each use.
- Late students will go directly to their classrooms.

Movement through the building:

Movement about the building is essential and cannot be eliminated. It will include policies and procedures to maintain social distancing and the integrity of the cohort system.

The following protocols will be implemented:

- Face masks will be required when outside of the classroom.
- Travel in the hallways will be limited to one cohort at a time using social distancing. This will require a schedule for bathroom and recess. Time between cohorts will be scheduled to allow for sanitization of the bathrooms in between each use.
- Water fountains will be shut down. Students are to bring a personal water bottle.
- Students will eat lunch in their classroom until further notice. The school lunch program will be delivered to the classrooms.
- Students will not move to specials or departmental teachers. Art, music, computer, and world language teachers will go to the classroom. Gym will be outside when possible.
- Students will not go to the library until further notice. E-books, classroom and home libraries, and teacher reading aloud will be implemented.
- Inside doors will remain open as much as possible to avoid unnecessary touching by students.
- There will be increased cleaning of all commonly touched surfaces, like railings, door knobs, etc. throughout the day.
- Because of less physical movement throughout the day, teachers will incorporate daily movement and exercise activities in the classroom.

Classroom Setup:

The organization of the classroom is important in supporting the academic progress of students. Classroom space should provide an environment that allows teachers and students to interact comfortably and safely. A foundational premise when designing a safe classroom environment are the concepts of maintaining cohorts and social distancing.

The following protocols will be implemented:

- Desks will be placed 4-6 feet apart, as measured from the center of one desk to the center of the next, in each classroom.
- Desks will be organized in rows and will all face the same direction within each classroom.
- Excess furniture will be removed to allow for spacing of desks.
- All throw-rugs and small carpets will be removed from the classrooms.
- Teachers will use face shields, so students can see their lips as they are providing direction and instruction.
- The use of a mask by the children is optional in the classroom.
- All classrooms will be provided disinfectant cleaner, wipes, and hand sanitizer for use in the classroom.

Classroom Materials:

As previously stated, the organization of the classroom is important in supporting the academic progress of students. The use of a variety of materials is essential for learning. This includes books, writing instruments, and materials for special area subjects.

The following protocols will be implemented:

- The use of shared objects (pens, art supplies, musical instruments, computers) will be curtailed or eliminated.
- When elimination may not be practical, additional cleaning protocols will be implemented as well as time between use to prevent the spread of germs.

Lunch:

Lunch in school serves multiple purposes, it is a time to replenish and nourish as well as a time to socialize and get a brain break. It is important to provide all of these goals and keep children safe.

The following protocols will be implemented:

- Students will eat lunch in their classrooms until further notice.

- Students will sanitize their hands and desks before and after eating. We recommend each child have a personal bottle of hand sanitizer to avoid common use and a napkin or cloth to place on the eating surface.
- Students are discouraged to share food.
- We will provide additional information about breakfast and lunch service when guidelines are released by the Archdiocese of Philadelphia's Nutritional Development Service.

Recess:

Recess is an important part of a child's school day. A safe and healthy recess promotes time to develop socially, emotionally, physically, and academically. During recess, students learn and practice important life skills, such as conflict resolution, decision-making, compromise, respect for personal space, and self-regulation. Additionally, recess provides a needed brain break and facilitates the learning process.

The following protocols will be implemented:

- Students must wear masks during recess.
- Cohorts will be assigned individual sections, clearly marked, to limit the interaction with other cohorts.
- Cohorts will line up and return to their classroom one at a time to avoid crowding the stairwells and hallways.
- Students will sanitize their hands after recess.

Dismissal:

Similar to arrival, the following procedures will be implemented to ensure a smooth, socially-distant dismissal.

- Masks must be worn at dismissal. Masks are to go home and be sanitized each day for the next day.

- Cohorts will be dismissed by grade and scheduled times to ensure there is no crowding the hallways and stairwells following social distancing guidelines.
- Upon leaving the building, students will keep social distance while walking to their pick-up stop.
- Students riding the bus will follow the guidelines of the bus transportation systems.

After School Activities:

Our students have experienced significant challenges since the shutdown on March 13, 2020. Where possible, keeping as many after school activities running, would help our students academically, physically, emotionally, and socially.

The following protocols will be implemented:

- Clubs will be postponed for the time being.
- During all after-school programs, students, when possible, will remain with their cohorts.
- Students will be required to wear masks during the entirety of the after-school program except when eating snacks.
- Guidance for athletic teams will be distributed once we receive information from the Catholic Youth Organization (CYO).

CARES:

It is integral for our schools to provide a CARES program especially during the current circumstances. It is paramount that we provide a safe, healthy and sanitized environment for those students entrusted to our care before and after regular school hours.

The following protocol will be implemented:

- Social and safe-distancing practices will be practiced. When able, the cohort model will be kept within the CARES program.
- Parents or adults picking up children are not allowed to enter the area where the CARES program is being held. Parents/guardians are to call the school when arriving and children will be accompanied to the school door to meet the parent/guardian.

- Students are responsible for providing their own snack and beverage during their time in CARES. There will be no snack sharing.
- All operational guidelines put into place in the school (e.g. movement through the building, recess, etc.) are to be practiced during CARES sessions.
- Hand washing and sanitizing will be monitored on a regular basis.
- Students will not share materials. They will have their own materials to use during CARES. These materials will be sanitized after use.

Building Operations:

A foundational premise when designing a safe learning environment are the concepts of maintaining cohort, social distancing and frequent cleaning. The use of these practices is recommended by the CDC and other health agencies to help control the spread of any viruses and also manage any possible outbreaks.

The following protocols will be implemented:

- Increase ventilation by circulation of outdoor air by opening doors and windows when possible.
- Outside visitors will not enter the school building. Please call or email the school office. If a child needs to leave early, parents/guardians are to call the school office and the child will be walked to the door.
- Signs will be posted in highly visible locations that promote everyday protective measures and how to stop the spread of germs.
- Water fountains will be turned off until further notice.
- Door handles, railings, sink handles and touched surfaces in common areas will be disinfected periodically throughout the day.
- Hand sanitizer will be placed at entrances, offices, and other common areas.

- After each cohort uses the bathroom, it will be disinfected for use by the next cohort. Teachers will follow the schedule for use of the bathroom so there is one cohort in the hallway at a time. Social distancing will be implemented during this time.

Virtual Learning:

While we realize that in-person instruction has greater impact at the elementary level, the need for virtual learning has become a reality in a variety of circumstances including the pandemic-related quarantines and government guidelines and regulations. Physical presence in the classroom allows time for students to develop spiritually, socially, emotionally, physically, and academically. When this is not possible, it is important to provide a means for student learning without interruption.

Virtual instruction will continue to apply best practices based on educational research and sound pedagogy. The term “virtual learning” refers to adapted instructional practices being utilized by means of online instruction and interaction with students using various technology devices and platforms aligned to the curriculum. Virtual learning can take place in situations where students are unable to be physically present in the school building.

The following protocols will be implemented:

- Grades K-8 will use Google Classroom as the Learning Management System to centralize materials, lessons, instruction, assessment, feedback, and communications.
- Direct instruction on a daily basis.
- Live-stream instruction by teacher directly from the classroom if other children remain in school. Students at home will be able to view the classroom instruction from home.
- Materials that are age and grade appropriate.
- Timely assessment and feedback.
- Regular communication with parents/guardians.

- For families who may choose at the outset of the school year to keep a child at home for health considerations specifically related to COVID-19, Saint Monica School will make accommodations for virtual learning. Those families must accept additional responsibilities related to supporting student achievement and well-being (e.g. monitoring student work and behavior). Students will dress in uniform each day and participate virtually from 8-3 PM along with their classmates. Students who participate virtually will not be graded differently from their peers. They will not be eligible for any grade based scholarships or recognition.

Contact Tracing & Isolation:

This section details the protocols that will be implemented in the case that there is a suspected or confirmed case of COVID-19 within the school community. These protocols are guided by recommendations from the CDC and other health officials.

If a student or faculty/staff member has a suspected case of COVID-19 or is demonstrating symptoms while at school, the following will take place:

- The individual with COVID-19 symptoms (such as fever, cough, or shortness of breath) at school will be separated from others immediately.
- Staff/faculty should leave the building upon confirming symptoms unless they are awaiting transportation. In that case, they should remain in the isolation room until they can leave.
- Students will be placed in a designated isolation room with a supervising adult until that student can be picked up by a parent or guardian.
- Individuals who are sick should go home or to a healthcare facility depending on how severe their symptoms are, and follow CDC guidance for caring for oneself and others who are sick.
- Individuals may return to school when they have met the following criteria:
 - 3 days with no fever **and**
 - Symptoms improved **and**
 - 10 days since symptoms first appeared, if cleared by a medical professional, or if he/she has a negative COVID-19 test.
 - If case of COVID-19 is confirmed, please reference sections below.

If a student or staff/faculty has a confirmed case of covid-19 the following actions are to take place:

- Notify the local health officials and seek guidance.
- Conduct contact tracing which will include a review of the faculty/staff member's schedule and who he/she came in contact with inside the school.
- Dismiss individual until local health officials can determine next step.
- If the individual is a teacher, Saint Monica School will consider dismissing the cohort and moving the virtual learning for a time period suggested by local health officials.
- Communicate with faculty/staff and families that there was a confirmed case, without using a name or identifying information of the person with COVID-19.
- Close off area the person was in and wait 24 hours and clean areas related to the identified case of COVID-19.
- During the initial 2 to 5 day period, evaluate if any other cases related to the case were identified and make a decision to extend or end the cohort dismissal.
- The staff/volunteer can return after the following conditions have been met:
 - 3 days with no fever **and**
 - Symptoms improved **and**
 - 10 days since symptoms first appeared, if cleared by a medical professional, or if he/she has a negative COVID-19 test.

If a student or staff/faculty has come in contact with someone that has a confirmed case of COVID-19 the following actions are to take place:

- The staff/faculty member or parent/guardian will immediately notify the school.
- The faculty/staff member will self-isolate according to CDC guidelines and report to the school if they have any symptoms or test positive.
- Saint Monica School will make accommodations for the student to participate virtually during the time of self-isolation.
- Saint Monica School may require a negative COVID-19 test result for any student or employee returning from self-isolation.

Education:

Students: A significant part of the first days of school will be devoted to educating the students about the protocols and procedures detailed in this plan. Education will be on a grade-appropriate level and will focus on the importance of hand sanitizing, social distancing, and safely sharing objects. A daily health tip will be made over the PA system each morning as well.

Parents/Guardians: Families will be provided ongoing resources through MSP and the Saint Monica School website about Archdiocesan guidelines, educational information, and how to properly screen for symptoms of COVID-19.

Faculty/Staff: We will devote a portion of our in-service professional development prior to the start of school to review these procedures and protocols. Teachers will be educated about how to assess their students for symptoms of COVID-19. There will also be additional professional development as needed.

We know that this will be a school year with great uncertainty and many questions that cannot be answered. It will be challenging for the students, faculty, and families. We encourage parents/guardians to talk with the children before the start of the school year to prepare them for the very different learning environment they will encounter in September. Our Counseling Team will be on-hand to work with any students to assist with the transition and help with any difficulty. Saint Monica School is committed to our students, parents, faculty, staff, and members of our school community. Let us move forward in faith, hope, and love.