

COVID-19 Preparedness Plan (August, 2020)

“Everything has suddenly changed. What we previously took for granted seems to be uncertain: the way we relate with others at work, how we manage our emotions, study, recreation, prayer, even the possibility of attending Mass...”

Pope Francis

A meaningful Catholic education, especially for our youngest learners, is less effective when physically separated from their peers and teachers. At the heart of Catholic Schools is relationship and community – relationships with Jesus Christ, classmates, and teachers. Those relationships blossom and develop most profoundly when our community members can interact, learn, and pray together. Therefore, Catholic schools from across Minnesota will open this fall and conduct classes on-site, face-to-face with our students.

To this end, this “Path for Students’ Return Preparedness Plan” has been developed to establish new protocols for maintaining the health, safety, and Catholic identity of our school. Much uncertainty lies ahead. The development of this preparedness plan cannot guarantee the absence of COVID-19 cases in our community or building, this reality we understand. The implementation of this guidance does allow us to mitigate and, God-willing, lessen the likelihood of exposure to our students, staff and community. Together, with Christ at the center, St. Thomas School will continue to be a place of spiritual, academic, social, and emotional development for our students.

The development of this plan took into consideration guidance from the following organizations:

- Considerations for Schools, Center for Disease Control and Prevention
- Guide to Reopening Schools, Catholic Mutual Group
- Minnesota Catholic Conference
- Minnesota Department of Health
- Minnesota Independent School Forum

“For I know the plans I have for you,” declares the LORD, “plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.” Jeremiah 29:11

SYMPTOMS OF CORONAVIRUS

People with COVID-19 have a wide range of symptoms – ranging from mild symptoms to severe illness. Symptoms may appear **2-14 days after exposure to the virus**. People with these symptoms may have COVID-19:

- Fever or chills
- Cough
- Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing
- Fatigue
- Muscle or body aches

- Headache
- New loss of taste or smell
- Sore throat
- Congestion or runny nose
- Nausea or vomiting
- Diarrhea

Most people have mild illness and are able to recover at home. If you think you or your child may have been exposed to COVID-19 contact your healthcare provider.

If **emergency warning signs** appear, get emergency medical care immediately. These warning signs are:

- Trouble breathing
- Persistent pain or pressure in the chest
- New confusion
- Inability to wake or stay awake
- Bluish lips or face

Call 911 or call ahead to your local emergency facility: Notify the operator that you are seeking care for someone who has or may have COVID-19.

Duration of Isolation and Precautions for People with COVID-19

For most people with COVID-19 illness, isolation and other precautions can generally be discontinued

- 10 days *after symptom onset* **and**
- resolution of fever for at least 24 hours without the use of fever-reducing medications **and**
- with improvement of other symptoms.

A limited number of people with severe illness may require extended isolation and precautions for up to 20 days after symptom onset.

For people who never develop symptoms, isolation and other precautions can be discontinued 10 day *after the date of their first positive test for COVID-19*.

ENSURE SICK STAFF AND STUDENTS STAY HOME

It is important that parents keep children home when they are sick. Schools are not expected to screen students or staff to identify cases of COVID-19. We recommend that families self-monitor and screen for illness at home including daily temperature checks. Persons who have a fever of **100.4 degrees or above** or other signs of illness should not come to school.

All teachers and staff will take a self-health screening survey and have their temperature checked at the start of each day. Heather McBride will coordinate temperature checks and maintain contact with parents and staff concerning illness and health status.

Employee Health Screening Checklist

Have you had any of the following symptoms since your last day at work?

- Fever or feeling feverish?
- Chills?
- A new cough?
- Shortness of breath?
- A new sore throat?

- New muscle aches?
- New headache?
- New loss of smell or taste?

Room 24 across from the office has been set up as a safe room with cots and a sanitation station where students or staff who become sick during the day can be isolated until they can leave the building.

School staff and parents should self-report to the school if they or family members have been exposed to someone with COVID-19 within the last 14 days or have tested positive for COVID-19.

Anyone who has had close contact with someone with COVID-19 should self-isolate at home for 14 days after exposure and/or stay isolated until receiving negative results from a COVID-19 test.

TRAINING/COMMUNICATION WITH STAFF AND STAKEHOLDERS

Working draft of Preparedness Plan will be sent to Advisory Committee and Staff members in August for their review, comments, and feedback.

Final draft of plan will be shared with the school and parish community along with local public health officials and public school administration.

COVID-19 Preparedness Plan will be posted on our school website and Facebook page. Printed copies will be placed in the church gathering space and school office.

Teachers and staff will receive extensive training on specific protocols, overall actions plan during teacher in-service days before the start of the school year.

Principal will meet with Ted Brokaw and custodial staff to review plan, develop a schedule for increased, routine cleaning and disinfection, and determine cleaning supply needs.

Teachers will present specific parts of plan to students that affects them directly. Students will be trained in correct protocols for handwashing, sanitizing work areas, use of face coverings and social distancing/interactions in different area of the school throughout the school day.

State and local realities related to COVID-19 will be constantly changing. Principal, teachers, and staff will review and adjust our action plan as circumstances change. Review of plan will be an on-going agenda item for all staff meeting throughout the school year.

Any changes to the Plan will be communicated to families via Facebook, school website, school newsletter, and School Messenger.

FOCUS ON IMPROVING, DESIGNING, AND DELIVERING FLEXIBLE INSTRUCTION BOTH IN-PERSON AND REMOTELY

Last spring teachers worked hard to deliver distance learning to students with relatively little preparation time.

Most teachers made use of learning packets which were directly connected to current curriculum. Fifth and sixth graders received learning via on-line instruction.

Teachers spent hours researching different instructional models and platforms that worked best for them. With much trial and error, they made a patchwork of approaches work.

This year we need to focus on improving, designing, and delivering flexible instruction so that we can quickly switch from in-person to remote learning, should the need arise.

One, common distance learning platform needs to be identified that will be used by all teachers to deliver distancing learning instruction.

Appropriate hardware (recording devices, tripods, etc.) needs to be identified, funded, and purchased. Distance learning hardware needs are not included in our current operating budget.

Twenty Chromebooks have been purchased over the summer. These can be used by families who do not have adequate computer/tablet access in their households.

In-service training needs to be provided to ensure proper use of distance learning platform and related hardware.

October 5 and 15 are scheduled in-service days which can be used to provide this training.

“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our afflictions, so that we may be able to comfort those who are in any affliction, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God.” II Corinthians 1:3-4

FACE COVERING REQUIREMENTS

The Governor’s Executive Order 20-81 requires people in Minnesota to wear a face covering in all public indoor spaces and businesses, unless alone.

Face coverings are most essential in times when physical distancing is difficult. Cloth masks are used to reduce the likelihood that the wearer will transmit virus to other staff members or children.

Masks are often homemade and should not be the medical-grade face masks such as surgical facemasks or N95 respirators. Disposable face coverings are available in the office for staff and students who do not have their own or forgot them at home.

All students, staff, and other people present in school buildings are required to wear a face covering. Children should not wear cloth face coverings unless they can reliably wear, remove, and handle the cloth covering throughout the day.

Face coverings **should not** be placed on

- Anyone under the age of 2
- Anyone who has trouble breathing or is unconscious

- Anyone who cannot tolerate a face covering due to developmental, medical or behavioral health condition

Students are not required to wear masks when outside during recess or during other outside activities while maintaining 6 feet social distancing.

Face shields allow for the visibility of facial expressions and lip movements for speech perception.

They may be used as an alternative to a face covering in the following situations:

- Among K – Grade 8 students when wearing a face covering is problematic
- By teachers when wearing a face covering may impede the educational process
- For anyone who cannot tolerate a face covering due to a developmental, medical, or behavioral health condition.

Temporary removal of face coverings or face shields **is allowed for:**

- Indoor physical activity (e.g. when exercising in the gym, hallway, or classroom), while maintaining 6 feet of distance.
- Eating or drinking, while maintaining 6 feet of distance.
- During indoor practices or performances involving singing, acting, public speaking, or playing musical instruments where a face covering cannot be used while playing the instrument, while maintaining 6 feet of distance.
- Staff working alone in their offices, classrooms, vehicles, or other job locations where there is no person-to-person interaction.

It is strongly recommended that people wear a face covering in **any public outdoor space when it is not possible to maintain 6 feet of physical distance** from others.

Key messages about cloth masks

- Be careful not to touch your eyes, nose, and mouth while wearing cloth masks to prevent potential contamination.
- Wash your hands thoroughly before putting on the mask.
- Remove the mask carefully and wash your hands thoroughly after removing.
- Wash the mask after each use.
- Wearing cloth masks does not replace the need to continue frequent hand washing, avoiding touching the face, and practicing social distancing, which are our best tools to help prevent the spread of illness.
- Continue to use your typical systems and processes for cleaning toys, keeping sick children home, washing hands, and other practices that are used every day. These actions help to keep the community healthy and safe.
- Cloth masks do not provide adequate protection for others if a staff member has symptoms compatible with COVID-19. Ill staff members should stay at home.
- Cloth face coverings should NOT be put on infants or children younger than 2 because of danger of suffocation.

Wear your Face Covering Correctly

- Wash your hands before putting on your face covering
- Put it over your nose and mouth and secure it under your chin
- Try to fit it snugly against the sides of your face
- **Don't** put the face covering around your neck or up on your forehead
- **Don't** touch the face covering, and, if you do, wash your hands or use hand sanitizer to disinfect
- Make sure you can breathe easily

Take Off Your Cloth Face Covering Carefully

- Untie the strings behind your head or stretch the ear loops
- Handle only by the ear loops or ties
- Fold outside corners together
- Place covering in the washing machine
- Be careful not to touch your eyes, nose, and mouth when removing and wash hands immediately after removing.

HAND WASHING

During the Coronavirus Disease pandemic, keeping hands clean is especially important to prevent the virus from spreading.

Key Time to Wash Hands

- **Before, during, and after** preparing food
- **Before** eating food
- **Before** and **after** caring for someone at home who is sick with vomiting or diarrhea
- **Before** and **after** treating a cut or wound
- **After** using the toilet
- **After** blowing your nose, coughing, or sneezing
- **After** touching an animal, animal feed, or animal waste
- **After** handling pet food or pet treats
- **After** touching garbage

Five Steps to Wash Your Hands the Right Way

1. **Wet** your hands with clean, running water (warm or cold), turn off the tap, and apply soap.
2. **Lather** your hands by rubbing them together with the soap. Lather the backs of your hands, between your fingers, and under your nails.
3. **Scrub** your hands for at least 20 seconds. Need a timer? Hum the “Happy Birthday” song from beginning to end twice.
4. **Rinse** your hands well under clean, running water.
5. **Dry** your hands using a clean towel or air dry them.

If hands are not visibly dirty, alcohol-based hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol can be use if soap and water are not available.

Teachers should supervise children when they use hand sanitizer to prevent ingestion and assist children with hand washing as needed. After assisting children with hand washing, staff should also wash their hands.

Parents are encouraged to provide hand sanitizing products for their children’s personal use.

DRINKING FOUNTAINS

Staff and students are encouraged to bring their own water and/or water bottle to minimize use and touching of water fountains.

Ideally, we would like to replace our water fountain with a water bottler filler. Cost is prohibitive at this time. Replacement cost is about \$1,500. This is something that is high on our Wish List.

CLEANING AND DISINFECTING

Each day the following high-touch surfaces will be cleaned and disinfected:

- **Tables, doorknobs, light switches, countertops, handles, desks, phones, keyboards, touch screens, toilets, faucets and sinks**

How to Clean and Disinfect

- Wear disposable gloves to clean and disinfect.
- Clean surfaces using soap and water, then use disinfectant.
- Cleaning with soap and water reduces number of germs, dirt and impurities on the surface. Disinfecting kills germs on surface.
- Always read and follow the directions on the label to ensure safe and effective use.
- Use no more than the amount recommended on the label
- Use water at room temperature for dilution (unless stated otherwise on the label)
- Avoid mixing chemical products
- Label diluted cleaning solutions
- Store and use chemicals out of the reach of children and pets
- You should never eat, drink, breathe or inject these products into your body or apply them directly to your skin as they can cause serious harm.

Frequently touched surfaces should be cleaned several times throughout the day. Custodial staff will clean each area one time each day.

Teaching and administrative staff is responsible for other cleaning of their work area throughout the day.

With proper training and supervision, older students can be expected to help with cleaning their work areas, desk, and storage areas.

Ted Brokaw Janitorial Service has ordered a disinfecting fogger/mister which will be used once a day to disinfect each area in our school.

Electronics

For electronics such as tablets, touch screens, and keyboards

- Follow manufacturer's instruction for cleaning and disinfecting
- If no guidance, use alcohol-based wipes or sprays containing at least 70% alcohol. Dry surface thoroughly.

Cleaning and Disinfecting Your Building or Facility If Someone is Sick

- Close off areas used by the person who is sick.
- Open outside doors and windows to increase air circulation in the areas.
- Wait up to 24 hours or as long as possible before cleaning or disinfecting to allow respiratory droplets to settle.
- Clean and disinfect all areas used by the person who is sick, such as offices, bathrooms, and common areas.
- Clean and disinfect surfaces in our isolation room after the sick person has gone home.

- Once area has been appropriately disinfected, it can be opened for use.
- Workers without close contact with the person who is sick can return to work immediately after disinfection.
- If more than 7 days have passed since the person who is sick visited or used the facility, additional cleaning and disinfection will not be necessary.

Cleaning and Sanitizing Toys and Classroom Learning Materials

- Toys that cannot be cleaned and sanitized should not be used.
- Toys that children have placed in their mouths or that are otherwise contaminated by body secretions or excretions should be set aside until they are cleaned by hand by a person wearing gloves. Clean with water and detergent, rinse, sanitize with an EPA-registered disinfectant, rinse again, and air-dry. You may also clean in a mechanical dishwasher. Be mindful of items more likely to be placed in a child's mouth like play food, dishes, and utensils.
- Machine washable cloth toys should be used by one individual at a time or should not be used at all. These toys should be laundered before being used by another child.
- Set aside toys that need to be cleaned. Place in a dish pan with soapy water or put in a separate container marked for "soiled toys."
- Washing with soapy water is the ideal method for cleaning. Try to have enough toys so that the toys can be rotated through cleanings.
- Children's books, like other paper-based materials such as mail or envelopes, are not considered a high risk for transmission and do not need additional cleaning or disinfection procedures.

Teachers are responsible for cleaning and sanitizing toys in their classrooms as needed.

Cleaning and Disinfecting Outdoor Areas

- Outdoor areas like playgrounds in schools generally require normal routine cleaning, but do not require disinfection.
- Do not spray disinfectant on outdoor playgrounds – it is not an efficient use of supplies and is not proven to reduce risk of COVID-19 to the public.
- High touch surfaces made of plastic or metal, such as grab bars and railings should be cleaned routinely.
- Cleaning and disinfection of wooden surfaces (play structures, benches, tables) or groundcovers (mulch, sand) is not recommended.
- Sidewalks and roads should not be disinfected. Spread of COVID-19 from these surfaces is very low and disinfection is not effective.

Playground equipment is not routinely cleaned at this time. This needs to be addressed. Who should be responsible for cleaning? How often should it happen?

PHYSICAL DISTANCING IN SCHOOL

St. Thomas School is fortunate to have extra classrooms and a relatively small population. We can easily accommodate appropriate social distancing practices throughout the school day. The following social distancing strategies are being implemented:

Relocation of Classrooms

To ensure that students and staff groupings are as static as possible and to minimize the mixing of groups, Mrs. Ecklund's (grades 3/4) and Ms Raboin's (grades 5/6) classrooms have been moved to the second floor.

Each combination grade teacher will have an overflow classroom available to them for the movement of student from one space to another to accommodate desk space/seating separation of 6 feet.

Student desks are to all face in the same direction (rather than facing each other).

- Ms Pierce, Grades 1/2 – Rooms 21 & 23
- Mrs Ecklund, Grades 3/4 – Rooms 36 & 37
- Ms Raboin, Grades 5/6 – Rooms 31 & 35

A safe/sick room will be located in Room 24 across from the office. It will be furnished with cots and a hand sanitation station where people can be isolated if they should become sick during the school day.

Should we have an influx of students, enrollment will be capped at **15 students per classroom in grades 1 – 6 and 10 students in kindergarten and each preschool session**. This will allow us to maintain proper social distancing of 3-6 feet in all classrooms.

We do have funding for one classroom aids built into our budget. Once our student attendance is finalized, the teacher aid's daily schedule will be determined.

Teacher aid and building principal will be available to help with will noon hour and playground supervision.

Music and Art Classes

Common classrooms which are used by all students will be closed for the school year. Music and Art programs will be mobile with teachers moving from classroom to classroom with lessons "on a cart."

Restriction of Nonessential Visitors and Activities

Visitors will have limited access to the building. Visitors will buzz the office at the main entrance and office staff will meet them there to pick up or drop off items.

Many school activities may be cancelled or modified. Decisions on how to safely conduct fundraising events, special performances, school-wide parent meetings, and field trips have not been made at this time. Further discussion and consultation needs to happen before final plans are announced.

Students will continue to attend Mass on Thursdays mornings. There is enough space in the church to allow for proper social distancing. Students will wear face masks during Mass time.

Prayer Buddy gatherings will be discontinued at this time. Decisions about large group prayer services (i.e. Advent Wreath, Stations of the Cross, etc.) will be made as those liturgical seasons occur.

Student Pick-up and Drop-off Will Take Place Outside

In the morning parents can drop students off in the alley on Eighth Avenue across from the police station or on Fourth Street away from the bus loading zone. Students will gather on the playground while maintaining proper social distancing from one another.

In the afternoon, parents can park on the school playground and wait in their cars for student dismissal. All traffic will flow in one direction. Vehicles enter the playground using the Fourth Street entrance and leave using the Eighth Avenue alley exit.

Teachers will escort student to the playground where they can safely go to their family vehicles. Once student are all loaded, teachers will notify parents that they can orderly leave the playground/student pick-up area.

Multiple Student Entrances and Exits

Preschoolers and Kindergarteners will use the **North** entrance.

Grades 1/2 and Grades 5/6 will us the **East** entrance.

Grades 3/4 will use the **West** entrance.

Lines will be painted on the sidewalk to indicate where students are to line up while maintaining proper social distancing.

Teachers will meet students at entrances and escort them to their classrooms.

Visual Cues to Direct Traffic Flow and Maintain Proper Distancing

Lines will be placed on hallway floors, stairways, and at student entrances to indicate proper distancing when students move from place to place.

6 foot circles will be painted on the playground a visual cues to remind students to maintain proper distance from one another.

Noon Hour Meal and Playground

The lunch room will not be used this year.

To maintain proper social distancing and to keep student groups from mixing with one another, **students will eat lunch in their classrooms.**

Hot lunch from County Market will not be available this year.

All students will “brown bag it” and **bring cold lunch from home.**

Milk will continue to be offered for sale at school.

Students should avoid sharing food, drink, or eating utensils.

Noon hour lunch and playground schedules will be staggered so that **not all students will be on the playground at the same time.**

Kindergarten, First, Second Grades:

- 11:30 – Lunch
- 12:00 – Recess

Third, Fourth, Fifth, Sixth Grades:

- 11:30 – Recess
- 12:00 – Lunch

One additional 15 minute recess time is available for individual classrooms each day.

Only one classroom on the playground at a time.

Teachers can arrange among themselves which time they will use.

- 9:45 am
- 10:00 am
- 10:15 am
- 1:45 pm
- 2:00 pm
- 2:15 pm

Students **are not required** to wear face coverings while at recess.

Children should maintain six feet separation from others as much as possible while on the playground.

Student should wash their hands before and after being on the playground and after touching play structures.

Teachers should facilitate games that limit physical contact such as relays, red light/green light, simple obstacle courses, walking/running clubs, dance competitions, organize track and field type events, etc. Be creative.

Additional Resources for playground activities:

- *SHAPE America: Strategies for Recess in Schools* https://www.shapeamerica.org/standards/guidelines/strategies_for_recess_in_schools.aspx
- *Minnesota Department of Education: Active Schools* <https://education.mn.gov/MDE/dse/health/act/MDE059014>
- Explore the Games Library and find other resources for active recess. *Playworks: Resources* <https://www.playworks.org/resources/>
- This tool could map specific play zones to maintain social distancing. *Recess Lab: Map Your Playground* <https://www.recesslab.org/resources/map-your-playground/>

Limit Sharing of School Supplies

Keep each child's belongings separated from others' by storing them in individually labeled containers, cubbies, or other areas and taken home each day for cleaning, if possible.

Ensure adequate supplies are available to minimize sharing of high touch materials to the extent possible. Each child should have his/her own supplies for personal, individual use. Let parents know when supplies are running low.

Each class should have one or two playground balls and other appropriate playground equipment in their classrooms for use during recess and/or gym times.

Playground equipment should be clearly labeled and returned to the classroom after each session.

Students may share the use of the balls and other equipment with one another for playing appropriate social distancing games on the playground.

Children need to wash their hands after playing with the equipment.

Playground toys should be cleaned periodically.

SIGNAGE AND MESSAGES

To provide clear instructions for students, staff, parents, and visitors regarding how to enter the building and grounds, signs will be posted at all entrances regarding:

- Anyone who is sick or experiencing symptoms of COVID-19, have tested positive for COVID-19, or recently had close contact with a person with COVID-19 must stay home.
- Anyone with a fever or flu-like symptoms may not enter the building.
- Which student groups are to use which school entrances.

Additional signs will be posted in highly visible locations that promote everyday protective measures.

Free printed and digital resources can be found on the DCD's main page under **Communications Resources**.

TRANSPORTATION

To limit exposure to COVID-19, parents are encouraged to transport their children to and from school. If work schedules or other complications make this difficult to do, please contact the school office and we can help arrange for student transportation to and from school.

We are unaware of ISD 361's plans for student transportation at this time. For details of their plans, you may contact the district's bus garage at 283-2050.

VENTILATION

Principal has met with Dave Chute to ensure ventilation systems operate properly. Some of the classrooms on the third floor need to have air exchange systems updated. The estimated cost of these needed improvements is \$18,000, which has not been built into our budget.

The Finance Committee has approved the request for the needed capital improvements. Work will be completed before the start of the school year.

Teachers are encouraged to increase circulation of outdoor air in their classrooms by opening windows and doors as much as is possible.

Use of window fans should also be considered.

Outdoor lessons are encouraged when weather and curricular outcomes allow for successful completion of planned activity.

"We remember before our God and Father your work produced by faith, your labor prompted by love, and your endurance inspired by hope in our Lord Jesus Christ." | Thessalonians 1:3

WHEN A CONFIRMED CASE HAS ENTERED A SCHOOL

In the event an infected person has been in the school building, state and local health officials will be immediately notified at health.schools.covid19@state.mn.us. These officials will help us determine a course of action for our school.

In accordance with state and local laws, families will be notified of our exposure, symptoms or positive testing of COVID-19 by any member of our school community, while maintaining confidentiality in accordance with ADA.

School Messenger notification platform will be used to notify parents and staff.

Families need to make sure contact information is current and up-to-date.

Please notify Heather of any change of address, phone numbers, and e-mail addresses.

Student and most staff will be dismissed for 2-5 days.

This initial short-term dismissal will allow time for health officials to gain a better understanding of the COVID-19 situation impacting our school and give us time to determine appropriate next steps, including whether an extended dismissal time is needed to stop or slow further spread of COVID-19.

During this time staff, students, and families are discouraged from gathering or socializing anywhere. They will be encouraged to shelter in place at home during this time.

Areas used by the individuals with COVID-19 will be closed off for 24 hours before cleaning and disinfection begins to minimize potential exposure to respiratory droplets.

Outside windows will be opened to increase air circulation in the area.

Cleaning staff will then clean and disinfect all areas used by the ill person, focusing especially on frequently touched surfaces.

During school dismissal, after cleaning and disinfection is completed, school may stay open for staff members while student stay home. This allows teachers to develop and deliver lessons and materials remotely.

School officials will work closely with local health officials to determine when students should return to school and what additional steps are needed for the school community.

PLAN IN THE EVENT THE SCHOOL IS SHORT-STAFFED DUE TO COVID-19

THIS IS A MAJOR CONCERN

St. Thomas School has very few substitute teachers we can call on.

Many of our subs are older and may have health concerns which will make it more difficult to fill needed teaching positions.

With many of our teachers providing instruction to multiple grade, it is unrealistic to expect them to cover for one another by combining classrooms when substitute teachers are not available.

Should one or more of our staff become infected with COVID-19, we may have to shut down and move to distance learning.

PREPAREDNESS FOR TEMPORARY CLOSURE

St. Thomas School may have to quickly pivot from in-person instruction to a distance learning model based on the realities of local schools or local community.

Teachers need to have a plan in place to provide distance learning in a short amount of time. In approaching curriculum planning, teachers should plan by unit rather than by week or by day focusing on important outcomes and determine what is reasonable in the current situation.

Following in-service training in the use of distance learning platform, teachers need to make sure they can successfully move from one mode of instruction to another. Practice with the use of distance learning hardware and software is strongly encouraged.

“For where two or three gather in my name, there am I with them.” Matthew 18:20

CONNECT WITH LOCAL PUBLIC HEALTH OFFICIALS TO DEVELOP A WORKING RELATIONSHIP

Local health officials need to be identified and contacted. A copy of our COVID-19 Preparedness Plan will be shared with them and their input/suggestions for improvement will be welcomed.

Information about local COVID-19 testing procedures, gathering of local COVID-19 data and number of current cases, and sharing of up-to-date information will be discussed.

COMMENTS FROM PARENTS AND ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Parents are all over the place when it comes to what they want for their children this year. This is an emotional and difficult time for them. Many feel there are no good options.

About half of the Advisory Committee Members prefer hybrid/distance learning model and half prefer and need face-to-face instruction because of work schedules.

**Two big concerns are safety and social/emotional needs of their children.
Their biggest question of us is can we make their children feel safe?**

Suggestions for communicating safety to children in a fun way:

- Assigned entrance doors could be named for animals.
- Groups of students for lunch/recess could have Saints names.
- Have students start the day with a unified prayer as a school.
- Identify a Saint of the Month and recognize students who exemplify that saint. (This could be coordinated with or Virtues Program)
- Could we sell official Saint Face Coverings for students and families as an easy fundraiser?

We have a maximum number of students identified, do we have a minimum number?
What's the fewest number of students we can have and still operate?
Who determines that number?

CLOSING COMMENT

As St. Thomas School continues to navigate the changes and procedures needed to deal with the Coronavirus pandemic, we are reminded repeatedly that God instructs us to “be not afraid” in times of crisis.

Catholic schools are not only rooted in faith, but are led by the Spirit. We have a collective mission to bring our students, families, and staff closer to Christ even during the challenging reality that we are experiencing.

We should not be afraid to act cautiously, pray boldly, and continue to be unified in bringing that mission of our Catholic schools to life. Our work is more important now than ever.