



St. Jerome Regional School

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July 26, 2020

Dear Parents:

We realize that our current situation is still unfolding; however, we do believe that there are some likely realities that we can anticipate. Some of those realities help our plans to reopen, while others may make it more challenging. It is important, as we plan, for everyone to be on the same page about what our plans are. We will remain committed to adjusting our approach based on the reality of the virus' spread in our area. Our school plans to be open for in-person learning in August. Students will begin returning to school on August 31 and in-person instruction will be offered. Schedules, classroom spaces, and day-to-day operations will be adjusted to allow for social distancing. The plan was developed to reduce the level of risk, but does not completely eliminate risks and exposure. For these reasons, remote instruction will also be an option at SJRS for students who do not feel comfortable returning to school. We will work with the families who are interested in remote learning as an option. SJRS will provide an enhanced version of what was offered in the spring. Details will not be finalized for remote instruction until we know how many students will want that option. If you would like to have your child participate in remote learning rather than in-person instruction, please notify our office by August 6th so that we can finalize our plans. Also, due to already existing substitute shortages anticipated this school year, instructional and non-instructional staff will be available to ensure coverage due to staff illness if the need arises.

Our strategy for a safe return to school this Fall includes two areas: Cohorts and Hygiene. At SJRS, we will keep our students in groups by homeroom, and limit contact between classes during the school day to minimize the potential spread of any illness from group to group. This means that we will have to make some changes such as multiple recess periods instead of a large group gathering, eating lunch in our rooms instead of the cafeteria, capping capacity in our restrooms, and limiting the rotation of our middle school and special subject classes. In our classrooms and common areas, we will be paying close attention to hygiene. We will have new procedures for entering and exiting the building, ECP, visitors, etc. We will train our students in next-level cleanliness. Our desks will have as much space between them as each classroom allows, and we will require our students to wash their hands frequently, cough into a tissue and disinfect our spaces.

We ask for your support in things such as family health checks before students come to school. Your students' list of things they should bring to school will include some new items, such as an extra face mask in their bookbags, hand sanitizer, tissues, their own

water bottle, and other items that are listed on their teacher class supply lists, etc. We will be limiting the sharing of items as well. We appreciate donations of items such as disinfecting wipes, sanitizer, tissues, hand soap, paper towels, etc.

Many of you have questions about specific aspects of our new normal. It is our priority to have our students in school daily. We will follow the guidance we are receiving from authorities, and we will do everything we can to meet those expectations. We must all remember that we are still in a pandemic, and we will have to remain flexible. Based on guidelines we have received; we are taking a precautionous approach to our response to COVID-19. Listed at the end of this are some of the questions you may have in some key areas.

Finally, I wanted to thank you for all you have done to support your children and our school family. A lot has happened since March, when we sent out our first parent letter regarding COVID-19, and you have been incredible supporters and partners. As you think back about the past few months, take pride in how you handled this most difficult situation; in your efforts to remain one school family, despite social distancing; and in the many hours you spent helping your children in their studies. Your children will always remember your commitment to them during these tough times. At times we all face challenges with our new reality, but thanks to your commitment we rose to the occasion for our kids; at a time when others debated what to do next, we focused on what is best for them and made it happen. We know some of these things will be difficult to do in any school, and we tried to minimize these difficulties as much as possible when we were developing our plan, but these are the things we need to do to keep students, staff and families safe. We look forward to seeing our students in August. In the meantime, please enjoy the rest of the summer. May God bless our students, their teachers, and their families.

Sincerely,

Mrs. Amy M. Hannis-Miskar, Principal

The SJRS Health and Safety Plan is now available on our website for your review. A question and answer document listed below will answer additional questions and to serve as a reference. Any changes and/or updates will also be posted as changes are warranted. Thank you for your patience during the pandemic.

SJRS Key Questions and Answers

Will our school reopen?

Yes. SJRS plans to open on August 31st for the 2020-21 school year. Preschool will start on September 2nd.

How will our school decide what to do?

The Office of Education in the Diocese of Allentown has given guidance to each of our schools and SJRS has established our own Health and Safety Task Force to address the Health and Safety Plan Development and the Pandemic Crisis Response. Guided by the advice and direction of state and government officials, the CDC and the Diocese of Allentown, we have been proactive and thorough in establishing policies to protect the health and safety of our students, faculty and staff. After reviewing the guidelines, we feel that we have come up with innovative ideas to maximize learning in a safe and healthy environment for students and staff while providing the best educational experience we can for our students.

Will people have to wear masks? Will masks be given to each student?

Yes and Yes. In accordance with the government mandate, face coverings will be required when not able to maintain six feet distance between students and staff. We believe that's important because we need to protect our students, our staff and our teachers. They all deserve to work and learn in an environment with a reduced risk of a disease without a vaccine and without a treatment. All students, staff and visitors are going to have to wear protective masks and we will have to wash our hands frequently. Wearing a mask will help cut down the possibility that we will be infecting another person. Each student will be given a cloth mask attached to a lanyard. Lanyards were purchased for students to attach masks. Each student will be provided with a cloth mask with an option to purchase additional masks and cleaning guidelines will be provided to students, parents, and guardians. Students will also be given a face shield. They can choose to wear either the mask or the shield while they are seated in class. Students may also choose to wear school appropriate face masks that they already own as long as they do not include anything inappropriate for school. Masks may be lowered when all are seated to eat or when properly socially distanced outdoors for gym or recess. Students should have an extra mask at all times in their bookbags.

Temperature checks

Students may have their temperatures checked as they enter the school. Staff will have their temperatures checked when they arrive at school. Temperatures will be taken with a touchless thermometer. If a student does have a temperature of 100.4 degrees or higher, they will be isolated to the greatest extent possible, until the parent comes to pick the child up to take them home. Students with a temperature of 100.4 degrees or higher will be required to be picked up. If a staff member has a temperature above 100.4 degrees or higher, they will be sent home immediately. Additional equipment will be purchased through a safety grant. The Temperature Check Kiosk; 15.6" screen with stand introduces the new infrared temperature sensor/detector. It provides alerts when a person is running a high temperature within 1 second. The system uses an advanced algorithm for detecting and calculating heat signatures. The highly accurate sensor measures with a tolerance of +/- 0.5 degrees Celsius (+/- 0.9 degrees Fahrenheit).

How will schools keep kids socially distanced in classrooms?

Students will be expected to remain, to the greatest extent possible, 3-6 feet apart from their peers during the school day. Social distancing will be required in all common areas. School purchased micro-barriers will also be placed at each student desk. Common areas utilized in classrooms, such as story time carpets will be discontinued until deemed safe. Classrooms with dividing walls will be opened where deemed appropriate to allow for more space between students.

Will our students have specials classes like physical education, recess, STEM, music, etc.?

SJRS will allow for these activities as long as proper social distancing can occur and may require face coverings if the distance cannot be maintained. We will limit the sharing of materials and equipment. If shared, materials and equipment will be cleaned between uses. At some times, specials classes may be rescheduled or cancelled due to shortages of substitutes.

What about in hallways, the bathrooms or at recess?

Playgrounds and other communal spaces, like cafeterias will be altered. We will alternate recess times to limit the number of students on the playground. Equipment will not be used at this time. Bathrooms will have a capped capacity of 3 people at a time, with lines socially distanced outside of the bathroom. Students will remain in the same classroom throughout most of the day to limit time in hallways and minimize the number of students coming into contact with high-touch surfaces. Restroom breaks should be scheduled to avoid crowding, according to the guidance. In grades 5-8 and all specials other than gym, the teachers will go into different classrooms to teach groups of students instead of the other way around, to reduce movement and mixing of students. In some cases, specials classes may be rescheduled if that teacher is needed throughout the building due to substitute shortages. Markings will be placed in the hallways to serve as reminders for students to socially distance.

Entering and exiting the school building: A map with directions for drop off and pick up will be distributed before the start of school. This is very similar to our normal routine, although this year, all students will enter through the exterior gym doors.

Visitor and volunteer policies: We will limit the amount of traffic into the school building. Students with parent notes to leave early will pick students up in the main lobby area with staff ensuring appropriate paperwork for pick-up is on file and having the parent sign the student out. Visitors will not be permitted to leave the lobby area. Visits to the office will have to be scheduled in advance.

Will schools be closed for a period of time if a student tests positive? Will the students and parents be notified of a student who tests positive?

Please see different phases of school chart. We will be notifying the Diocese of Allentown Office of Education and the Department of Health of all positive COVID 19 tests. We will work with the Office of Education to notify staff and families of any confirmed cases while maintaining confidentiality.

What's going to happen to school lunches in a Covid-19 world?

School lunches will take place in the individual classrooms. If possible, Kindergarten and 1st grade may go to the cafeteria, but will be socially distanced in the large space by class. We are still awaiting more information from the TASD in order to finalize our lunch plans.

Will SJRS clean and disinfect buildings?

Additional equipment will be purchased through a safety grant. This will enhance our staff's ability to disinfect and sanitize areas throughout the days and every night. The teachers and staff will also work to clean and disinfect the common areas and objects throughout the day.

A Motoscrubber Back Pack Sprayer with floor scrubber will be purchased through a safety grant. Motoscrubber uses Battery Backpack Technology which gives the user many advantages. This is the type of machine you carry around the building. Approved disinfectant will be used with it. Wall-mounted hand sanitizer dispensers for classrooms will also be installed. Foaming hand sanitizer dispenser with stand for main lobby and office areas. Each of our classrooms are also equipped with its own sink for students to wash their hands.

Will we be prepared for a return to distance learning if there is another shut-down?

Yes, but we hope our protocols will make school as low-risk as any gathering place can be.

Will there still be ECP (extended care program in am and pm)?

Yes. SJRS will follow the same social distancing and safety protocols that have been developed for the school day.

Homework- Each teacher has their own page on our website. Normally, their homework was posted on their individual page. This year, their teacher page will include links to the following: OptionC, Google Classroom, Zoom, Dreambox Math, Stemsscopes and may include more. Teachers will post newsletters and homework assignments within their google classroom page. This was decided upon in order to reduce the amount of paperwork that will be coming back and forth to school. This will also help with finding all of the information you need in one place. The teachers email addresses are also listed on their pages.

Mass- Mass will be celebrated weekly, although we will not gather in the gymnasium this year due to social distancing guidelines. We will rotate a new homeroom each week and have Mass in the school Chapel. The Mass will be played in each homeroom and also be shared on Facebook for our families to view at home.

Uniforms

Students are required to wear the everyday uniform for Mass and on Tuesday, Wednesday and Friday.

Mass-This year, in an effort to alleviate additional costs, we are not requiring the dress uniform to be worn for Mass and/or special occasions.

School Spirit Dress Down Days- This school year, we will allow for School Spirit Wear and/or gym uniforms to be worn two days each week. Monday and Thursday of each week will be the school spirit dress down days. Tuesday, Wednesday and Friday will require the everyday uniform. There may be other times throughout the year when extra dress down days are also granted.

Lockers/Cubbies- We will not be using shared lockers/cubbies this year. Students will keep their belonging next to their desks due to limiting the sharing of items and also so that we are limiting walking around the room. Kids will have their needed belongings with them near their desks.

Perfect Attendance-There will be no perfect attendance award this school year. We want students to stay home if they don't feel well.

Remote Learning Option While School is Open- (This option can be selected on a monthly basis). If selected each student will engage daily in their education through virtual learning. Students will view recorded lessons for instruction of new material that may include a short video of the teacher, a power point presentation, other type of video clip, etc. (10-20 minutes). They will also be given additional resources that will help reinforce the skill they are learning. Virtual learning will include independent practice that has the students submitting work after the students have answered questions, problems, etc. Students will be assessed and graded in the same way as if they were in school. Content and assignments will be the same for all students. Teachers will be available through email, office phone and scheduled virtual meetings.

Tuition and Fees

Given the many health related challenges along with educational and societal disruptions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, we do understand and appreciate your concerns regarding tuition. Please know that our focus remains on the health and safety of our students, faculty and staff as well as continuing to provide the high-quality Catholic education our families at SJRS deserve and expect. If we would have to close part of our school, an individual classroom or multiple classes for any period of time, our teachers will continue to work remotely to move forward with the curriculum. Because we are not publically funded and our budget is based on fixed costs, this will require parents to continue to meet their tuition obligations. Please remember that our cost to educate does not equal the cost of tuition. We have been able to offer a lower tuition rate for many years due to many reasons: The outstanding efforts of our HSA with fundraising, the generosity of our donors, parish support for our supporting parishes, applying for and receiving grants, among other things. The cost to educate is approximately \$6500 per student. Our tuition for first child is \$3400.

Will school wide assemblies and field trips be on hold for a while?

Yes.

How will transportation work?

We will work with the public schools in regards to transportation. We have not yet received any information from the individual districts, but as soon as we do have information we will share it with you.

#StayHealthyAtSchool

#WePrayTogether

#WeHelpProtectEachOther

#SociallyDistancedButStillASchoolFamily

#HealthyBody&SpiritPriority