



August 6, 2020

Dear Parents,

St. Francis of the Lakes Catholic School understand families, parents and students, have MANY questions and concerns regarding the school's "reopening plan" for fall. Please know that administration and staff have been and continue to work diligently to devise a plan for a healthy, safe, and positive return of our students and staff to the school building on September 8th.

Our reopening plan encompasses guidance from the Minnesota Department of Health (MDH), Center for Disease Control (CDC), Minnesota Independent School Forum (MISF) as well as the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP), and in conjunction with the Diocese of Duluth Catholic Schools. We have also been in contact with knowledgeable and professional resources in our community to provide feedback when needed. We will continue to work and design a comprehensive plan that is flexible enough to be responsive to the ever-changing impact of COVID-19 on our community yet provide the needed safety, security, and quality Catholic education that you expect from St. Francis. As I started in my previous letter, plans cannot guarantee the absence of COVID-19 cases in our school; however, the implementation of this guidance does allow us to mitigate and God-willing, lessen the likelihood of exposure to our students, staff, and community.

We are excited for our students to return for in-person learning this fall and while many things will look a little different, our mission remains the same: *St. Francis of the Lakes Catholic School, in cooperation with and in support of the family, is committed to challenging students to grow spiritually, academically and socially within a Catholic environment.*

For our school to remain open, and to keep the students and staff healthy, the St. Francis Reopening and Preparedness Plan needs to be supported and practiced. With that said, I am providing some information and FAQs. Please know that this is a working draft and a more comprehensive St. Francis School Reopening Plan will be coming very soon!

Prayers and Peace,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Jennifer Nagel".

Jennifer Nagel, Principal
St. Francis of the Lakes Catholic School

Reopening and Preparedness Plan

Updated 8.5.2020



We know that parents have many questions about the school year. In this document, we have outlined many of the frequently asked questions (FAQs) from parents and provided information about our reopening plan for St. Francis School. These questions are meant to provide you with some information and address different aspects of the reopening process.

It is important that we follow these guidelines if we want the school building to remain open. Understand that they will not fully prevent illness, but they are precautions to help limit the chances of the virus and improve overall health and safety of our students, teachers, and staff.

Face Coverings:

The main guidelines set forth by MDH and the CDC to limit the spread of COVID-19 is wearing a face covering and practicing social distancing. With that said, your student will be required to wear a face covering such as a mask (paper or cloth), bandana, scarf, neck gaiter, each day at school.

FAQs:

Who needs to wear a face covering?

All students K-8, teachers, and staff entering the school building are required to wear a face covering. Faculty and staff will wear a variety of face coverings including face shields and/or masks to protect them from the potential spread of germs.

Preschool students are not required to wear a face covering, however, will be allowed if parent requests. Preschool teachers and staff will be required.

Students in grades K-4 will not be required to wear face covering while working individually at their desks or in their classroom but will be required in common areas and hallways. It will ultimately be up to the classroom teacher's discretion.

Students in grades 5-8 will wear face coverings throughout the day, or at the discretion of their teachers.

Students will not be required to wear face coverings during lunch, recess, physical education (gym) class, or any classes that are held outdoors. (They will need to wear during the transition/hallway time.)

Students that are in music/band/choir will be allowed to remove face covering when practicing social distancing in order to play an instrument or provide vocal demonstrations, however, overall requirements in class will be at the discretion of the teacher.

What if my child cannot wear a mask?

If your child is unable to tolerate a face mask due to developmental, medical, or behavioral health conditions, a doctor’s note will be required. A face shield is a safe alternative that should be considered. If unable to wear a face shield, alternative options for schooling will be considered.

Will masks be provided to my child?

St. Francis School will provide one cloth face covering to each student. The MDH will be providing a cloth mask to each child as well. The school will provide disposable masks to a student if they arrive to school without one.

How many masks should I have for my child?

St. Francis School recommends that each child have 3-5 masks that are available to them between home and school.

Do students masks need to follow uniform colors/policy?

No, masks do not need to follow the uniform or school colors, however, they need to be appropriate and safe. Designs and logos are allowed, however, no political slogans, etc.

How often should my student change or wash masks?

The MN Department of Health recommends that students wear a clean mask daily.

For more information visit [Masking Recommendations for Child Care and Schools: COVID-19](#).

Health and Safety Protocols:

St. Francis is committed to supporting the overall health and wellbeing of our students, parents, and staff to be able to provide safe and quality Catholic education. All students, teachers and staff will be required to wear face coverings and also have daily wellness and temperature checks before entering the school building.

FAQs:

Who will be responsible for their children’s daily temperature and wellness check?

Parents will need to take their children’s temperature at home and review the wellness checklist each morning.

Upon entering the school building, all students and staff will also have their temperature checked – those with a temperature of 100 or higher will need to be sent home immediately.

What are the added safety protocols during the school day?

The teachers and staff will schedule and encourage **increased handwashing** during the day including before the start of school, before and after lunch and recess, after using bathrooms, or sneezing/coughing when a mask is not worn.

Hand sanitizer will be available in and around each classroom and the school. The students will use hand sanitizer before changing locations within the classrooms, such as changing stations/groups, and when entering each classroom. Students can bring their own personal hand sanitizer to use during the day.

Water fountains will not be available. Each student is encouraged to bring their own **water bottle** to keep at their desk. These can be filled at the **bottle fillers** which will be sanitized daily.

Visual cues will direct traffic flow in hallways and common areas to maintain proper social distancing. Arrows and lines will be placed on hallway floors, stairways, and entrances to indicate proper distancing. Signage displayed will also encourage proper social distancing, handwashing, mask handling, etc.

Students will move throughout the day staying within their class. When students are within their class, they should remain 3-6 feet apart. When students are around other classes, they should remain at least six feet apart when feasible. We believe the class/cohort model provides for better containment should there be a positive case of COVID-19.

Student's desks will be organized in rows facing the same direction to allow for social distancing as much as possible. When student's desks need to be near each other, a divider may be used.

Will teachers teach children how to properly hand wash, use masks, etc.?

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. This will be done by a teacher or the school nurse.

Will there be a nurse available at the school?

Our plan is to have a school nurse or aid available daily at St. Francis. This is yet to be determined and we are continuing to address this concern.

My child and/or another member of my household is in an at-risk group for COVID-19. Should I send my child to school?

The CDC has defined conditions in which [certain people may be more at risk for a severe illness through COVID-19](#). If your child or another member of your household is an at-risk group, we encourage you to speak to your doctor. Ultimately you should decide whether it is safe for your child to attend school. A distance learning or alternative plan may be considered.

What if a student or teacher test positive for COVID-19?

If closure is necessary for a classroom, cohort, or campus, students and teachers will transition temporarily to remote learning during the self-quarantine period using the same platforms they used in the spring. (Teachers will be further trained and familiar with these platforms, SeeSaw Prek-4 and Microsoft Teams 5-8.) The family and school will follow the [MDH Decision Tree for People with COVID-19 Symptoms in Youth, Students and Child Care Programs](#) to guide decisions on quarantine and return time to onsite learning. We will utilize the district provided school nurse, MDH, MDE, and Crow Wing County services for consultation and guidance when it involves communications of COVID-19 exposure and management so confidentiality is maintained.

St. Francis School is currently in alignment with Governor Walz's executive order. We will continue to work collaboratively with the public district and align our efforts where it best supports our students. St. Francis will support the authority of the diocese and state mandates. St. Francis is not required to utilize the same plan as the district.

Cleaning/Sanitizing Protocols:

We know cleaning and disinfecting classrooms and common areas of the building help limit the spread of germs, so we are increasing the frequency around the school building.

Custodial staff will increase midday cleaning of bathrooms, cafeteria, handrails and high touch surfaces and common areas of the school. All classrooms will be cleaned and sanitized at the end of each day, including doors/knobs, light switches, counters, etc.

Teachers will increase cleaning and sanitizing of common areas in their classrooms. All prek-4 student's desks will be disinfected at the end of each day and students in 5-8 grade will disinfect desks between classes and exchanges of students.

As another added precaution, weather permitting, windows will remain open to improve the **airflow** in the classroom. Air purifiers in classrooms may be used. Air filters will be changed more frequently as well.

Guidance from the CDC indicates that outdoor **playgrounds** generally require normal routine cleaning, but do not require disinfecting. Plastic or high-touch areas will be focused for routine cleanings. Click here for [MDH Playground Guidance for Schools](#).

Visitors, Volunteers, and Parents:

FAQs:

Will parents be allowed to visit or volunteer in the classroom?

No. Daily access to St. Francis school building will be limited to students and staff.

In limited special cases, an administrator may allow preapproved visitor to enter the school building following the same protocols as teachers and staff.

Drop-off and Pick-up:

FAQs:

Will I be able to drop-off and pick-up my student from their classroom or in the school?

No. Since we need to limit the number of adults in the school building, (as a recommendation by the CDC, MDH, and Diocese of Duluth,) to help minimize the spread of the virus, parents will not be allowed in the school building. *Parents are asked not to congregate near school exits.*

Parents who are **dropping off items** for their students, such as lunch or sports equipment, will need to call the school office for notification and once they arrive at the school building, are allowed to enter the front doors of the school and ring bell to alert secretary or office staff member.

Parents who are **dropping off their students at the start of the school day** will be met at their vehicle by a St Francis staff member or approved school volunteer. The exact location is yet to be determined; however, the carpool lane may be utilized for this. More direction will be given.

Parents that are **picking up their students at the end of the school day** will be asked to utilize the carpool procedure. More direction will be given for this as well.

Parents who will be **picking up** their child **during the school day** will be expected to call the school office when they arrive at the school to give permission to the office staff to sign their child out. An office staff member will escort the student to the doorway to visually identify parent/guardian for transfer of care. Only parents/guardians or approved individuals identified on the student's contact list, with appropriate identification, will be allowed to leave with the student.

Please Note: to limit disruptions, office congestion, and practice social distancing, dismissal within 15 minutes of the end of the regular school day will not be allowed. Please call the school with any dismissal changes no later than 2pm.

Bus Transportation:

St. Francis shares bus transportation services with the Brainerd Public School District for families within the district borders. Families that live outside the district boundaries utilized the Public Transit System (Crow Wing County busses).

Will my children be provided bus transportation?

Transportation is to be determined with the district once they complete their back-to-school plans. Crow Wing Country buses are also to be determined. *Parents are encouraged to think about and arrange their own transportation for their children in the case bus transportation is not provided.*

Open House, Uniform Sale, and School Performances:

FAQs:

Will St. Francis still have a Back-to-School Open House?

Yes. The onsite Open House will be held on September 1 for PreK-4th grade families only. The layout and schedule will allow for limited numbers and social distancing. A face covering for students, parents, and teachers/staff upon entering the school will be required as well. There will be an online Informational Meeting to follow. One will be for elementary grades K-4 and a separate meeting for middle school grades 5-8 families. They will also be recorded and available afterwards. Stay tuned, more details to come soon!

Will St. Francis still hold the annual Uniform Sale?

Yes, it will be held August 17-20. There will be limited numbers allowed in the building and all who enter will be asked to use hand sanitizer, wear a face covering, and practice social distancing.

How about Grandparents Day, the Christmas Program, and the Spring Concert?

These are all temporarily suspended. A virtual or online program may be considered. More to come soon!

Will student still participate in the Marathon for Nonpublic Schools?

Yes. Although the structure and scheduled will be modified to allow for limited numbers and social distancing. More to come soon!

Will St. Francis offer a children's play through Prairie Fire Children's Theater this year?

This is yet to be determined.

Lunch:

The lunch process and procedures will be modified, and cleaning and safety protocols will be increased. St. Francis is developing a customized plan with staggered lunch periods to allow for social distancing and increased sanitizing between each period.

FAQs:

Will the cafeteria be used, or will students need to eat in their classrooms?

The cafeteria will be used but have limited seating to allow for social distancing. More lunch periods will be added, as necessary.

Will hot lunch be provided, or will parents need to provide a cold lunch daily?

Since St. Francis contracts with the Brainerd School District for Food Services, this is yet to be determined.

Recess:

Recess schedules and procedures will be modified, and cleaning and safety protocols will be increased. St. Francis is developing a customized plan with staggered recess periods.

FAQs:

Will students be allowed to have recess?

Students will be allowed to have recess but will be limited to staying within their cohort and only use equipment that is designated for their cohort/class. More recess periods will be added, as necessary. Face coverings will be optional when outdoors.

Will students be allowed to play on playground equipment?

Guidance from the CDC indicates that outdoor playgrounds generally require normal routine cleaning, but do not require disinfecting. Plastic or high-touch areas will be focused for routine cleanings. Click here for [MDH Playground Guidance for Schools](#).

School Mass and School Prayer:

It is important to know that daily prayer in each classroom will continue to help us begin and end each day mindful of our need for gratitude as well as prayer of petition for all those impacted by COVID-19. Since Mass is an important part of our week, St. Francis will continue to provide school Mass to students and staff. The school is working with the priests to find a way to bring the sacraments to students in a meaningful and healthy way.

FAQs:

Will school Mass be open to the public?

No. Since we will need to limit the numbers in the church, school Mass will be closed to the public and only limited students and staff members will be allowed. All St. Francis church daily Masses are live streamed on <https://www.blccnorth.org/>.

Will students be allowed to go to Mass at the church?

St. Francis students and staff will continue to participate in the sacraments and will be working along with the church to decide the rotation or number to allow for social distancing. The schedule will offer live Mass to each class at the church 1-2 times a month with the other weeks being live streamed into their classrooms at the school. More to come soon!

Will weekly adoration at the school chapel still be provided?

As of now, adoration in the school chapel will be suspended.

Will students still have Prayer Buddies?

Prayer Buddy activities will be discontinued at this time. Decisions about large group prayer services and/or assemblies such as Living Rosary, Stations on the Cross, May Crowning will be made as those liturgical seasons occur.

Afterschool/Extended Care (Kaleidoscope Club):

FAQs:

Will Kaleidoscope Club still be offered?

Yes, however modified schedules and locations will be in place and the students will be asked to practice social distancing. Depending on numbers, students may be asked by KC director and/or assistant to stay in cohorts. Face coverings will also be required. Preschool students may be separate. Kaleidoscope Club is offered for preschool-8th grade St. Francis students daily from 3-5:30.

Homework Time for 3-8th grade:

FAQs:

Will Homework Time still be offered?

This is yet to be determined.

Tuition & Fundraising:

FAQs:

Will St. Francis still collect regular tuition, even if needing to close a classroom for a limited time, go to hybrid, distance learning?

Yes. While this school year may look different at times, our school will continue to provide a rigorous academic experience while supporting the moral and spiritual development of each student. St. Francis school depends upon tuition revenue to pay our teachers and staff who do this work and support other school-related expenses.

What about the family fundraising commitment?

Yes. St. Francis will still hold fundraisers, although things may be different than in the past. It is important to remember that the \$800 per family is a part of the annual tuition that each family pays and is included in the operating budget as tuition revenue.

Training and Communication with Staff and all Stakeholders:

Working draft of Reopening and Preparedness Plan will be sent to School Board 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.

Reopening and 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 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.

As stated, more information and details will be coming soon...

- Middle school movement between classes
- Specialty classes (art/music/band)
- Bus transportation through Brainerd Public Schools (availability and times)
- Food services that are offered through Brainerd Public Schools (all cold or hot & cold served)
- Athletics and activities through Brainerd Public Schools, along with shuttle bus transportation
- Homework Time, grades 3-8
- Robotics Club, grades 4-8
- Spanish Club, grades 1-4
- Prairie Fire Children's Theater
- Exact criteria for a student or staff member testing positive and what information can be shared with community
- Exact schedule and format for all-school, elementary, and middle school faith assemblies
- Distance Learning experience details, explained per teacher/class

“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