

July 9, 2020

Dear Families,

We hope this email finds you well. We wanted to give you an update as to where we are at with planning for the upcoming school year.

As you know, Governor Whitmer released the MI Safe Schools: Michigan's 202-21 Return to School Roadmap on June 30th. This applies to all Michigan schools, including private and parochial schools. The diocesan principals and superintendent met on July 1st to discuss the Roadmap. On July 1st our Diocesan Superintendent of Schools, Margaret Erich, sent out a letter to all diocesan school parents that indicated that diocesan schools will be following the items in the Roadmap that are **REQUIRED**, and the items that are **STRONGLY RECOMMENDED** and **RECOMMENDED** will be implemented as appropriate in the individual schools.

The Roadmap is divided into Phases 1-6, based on where the State of Michigan is at in the MI Safe Start plan. As of today, our region is at PHASE 4. That means that we are allowed to return to face-to-face instruction, with strict health & safety requirements and recommendations. We are planning for increased cleaning & sanitizing of classrooms, bathrooms, hallways, offices, etc, and ensuring we have adequate supplies of hand sanitizer, soap, and other cleaning supplies. I know that the big question is about mask/facial coverings. According to the guidelines all school staff will be **REQUIRED** to wear masks/facial coverings. Students K-5 are not required to wear masks in the classrooms, but it is highly recommended. So if parents want their K-5 student to wear a mask in the classroom, they may do so. Students K-5 will need to wear masks in the hallways and other common areas of the school where they would be mixed with students from other classrooms. Again, this is what is indicated in the guidelines. We also may be looking at a different starting time to allow for staggered arrivals so that temperature checks can be done and to eliminate crowds of students in the hallways at one time. We can't say for sure what that will exactly look like right now, but we just wanted to make you aware that this is one of many things that may be different when we return to school.

Now, the next "What If." There has been a lot in the news and social media about the possibility of Governor Whitmer moving the state back to Phase 3. IF we are moved back to Phase 3, then all schools are closed and we would move to online learning. We have also been planning for this scenario.

Our hope and prayer is that our region remains in Phase 4 (or even move to Phase 5) so that we have our students back here at school on August 18th, and as of today that is what we are planning for. However, this is an unprecedented time that we know changes on a daily basis. Our plan is to keep you informed every week the best we can with the information that we know. We are also planning to hold some Zoom meetings for parents as an opportunity to give updates and answer your questions.

In the meantime, please let us know what your questions and concerns are. Your input and feedback is so important for our planning as well.

We hope you are all having a wonderful summer and we continue to pray that you are all staying safe and healthy!

Take care,
Sara Myers and Katie Reed
St. Joseph Elementary and Middle School Administrators