

November 18th, 2020

Dear St. Joseph Preschool & Elementary Parents,

There is great concern with the number of new COVID-19 cases here in Calhoun County and across the state. Here at school, we have been working diligently to prevent the spread of COVID-19 within our schools with the use of our health and safety protocols. However, the local health departments are very concerned about the level of transmission that is occurring at family gatherings and social events. This concern is further heightened with the Thanksgiving holiday break approaching, and possible exposures due to family gatherings.

In an effort to be proactive and limit exposure to our students, staff and families, we will be moving to virtual learning the week after Thanksgiving break. This decision has been made together with the St. Joseph School & Parish Administration, the BCACS School Advisory Board, the Diocese of Kalamazoo and the Calhoun County Public Health Department. We will return to in-person learning on Monday, December 7th.

Our reasoning for this is that anyone who may have been exposed during the holiday should begin to show symptoms during that week. In virtual learning, this would limit transmission here at school. We would then have two full weeks of face-to-face learning before Christmas break. On the flip side, if we were to return to face-to-face learning right away after Thanksgiving, anyone who may have been exposed and contracted the virus would most likely begin showing symptoms by Tuesday or Wednesday of that week. Therefore, exposing many other staff and students and requiring a full shut-down, which possibly means kids wouldn't be in school until after the Christmas Break. The idea is to try and maximize the number of days that we can get with face-to-face learning.

We understand that this temporary move to virtual learning may cause some stress for families. Every family's situation is different, depending on who is working from home, how many siblings, access to devices, etc. We want you to know that teachers and staff are here to help support you through this time. There have been multiple strategy and planning meetings in the last week to prepare and teachers should be communicating their plans with you soon. We have also carefully scheduled Zoom classes with siblings in mind, so that there should be no overlapping for our elementary families. If there are any concerns surrounding your family's circumstances, please reach out to us, we are here to help!

Patience, flexibility and grace have been our most important tools this year and we are committed to helping all of our families with this in mind, and we ask the same from you.

Although Thanksgiving may look a lot different this year for many families, there is still so much to be thankful for and we will pray that everyone stays healthy so that we can see you all back at school on December 7th.

God bless you all,
Sara Myers
Principal
St. Joseph Elementary & Preschool