



August 14, 2020

St. Mary's Community:

In the last parent newsletter, we noted Miss Larsen's retirement. We welcome Miss Schroeder who was previously at Columbus Schools in Marshfield. She taught middle school literature there and will here as well as social studies. Miss Globensky will move into Miss Larsen's position.

Our reopening plan is on the home page of our website. Many of the major components were given in previous letters. To reiterate major points, we plan on having face-to-face instruction five days a week as well as after care. We will limit visitor access to the school to those conducting essential educational experiences. Thus, when picking up or dropping something off at school, please call ahead and visit the sliding window by the main office and Mrs. Lang will help you. 4K parents, on the first day of school, we would like you to park in the back parking lot for drop off and limit your time in school. We will limit mixing between grades and some of the courses will have alternate curriculum for a period of time. Masks are mandatory as long as the executive order is in place. We are building in mask breaks but if a student refuses to wear one when entering school, they will be sent home. We are encouraging social distancing and a clean environment as best as possible. We are also limiting shared materials including encouraging individually wrapped snacks (your child's teachers will give instructions).

Busing will be provided for St. Mary's students every day of the week including Wednesdays. However, it is possible your child will have a different bus number, driver, pick up and drop off time on Wednesdays compared to the other days of the week. There will no longer be the 2 transfer buses to the elementary school at the end of the school day, rather all buses will pick up from 6th and Market near church and the students will be transported home. Students will have assigned seating each day of the week, in consideration of social distancing. There will be two drop offs during the morning pick up and afternoon drop off (except Wednesdays), thus some students may be late in the morning (they will be excused). We are encouraging parents to drive and pick up students if possible. If a student opts out of St. Mary's for a period of time to do virtual learning, they can return to school, but with limited seating they will not be able to ride the bus when they return until the end of the semester.

We have had parents exercise the opt out option. The form can be found on our website/School Resources/Family Support Links, <http://www.stmarysmarathon.org/OptOutOption.pdf>. Students that opt out will be learning virtually at home. If choosing to send your child to face to face instruction at St. Mary's, you are sending them into a building with roughly 200 other people. As the CDC has noted, the lowest risk for schooling is virtual schooling, while schooling face-to-face entails a higher risk even with the precautions we are taking. If you are choosing in-person instruction, a checklist has been provided on our website School Resources/Family Support Links <http://www.stmarysmarathon.org/COVIDBacktoschool.pdf>.

Virtual learning would look somewhat different for those that opt out versus if the whole school closed again. The two most common suggestions from the parent survey on distance learning were more teacher instructional time virtually and one platform for instruction. Virtual learning would be similar to last spring but there would be changes such as more emphasis on real time or recorded teacher instruction from school. There isn't really one platform that can fully do what we want that isn't cost prohibitive, but one advantage of Sycamore is it integrates with GSuite. There also are many people (roughly 25% in last year's middle school) that do not have internet or reliable internet as well as many different family situations. Increased teacher instruction and

St. Mary's School ♦ 716 Market Street, Marathon, WI 54448 ♦ Phone: (715) 443-3430

limiting platforms would be done but what works for one family might not work for some of the other over 100 families in this school. Thus, if we are forced to go back to virtual learning, you might need to check additional places for instructions or take extra steps, taking into account the other people who go to this school and their individual situations and needs. Increased access to the teachers and teacher instructional time is the more feasible of the two to implement and would be a priority, but many families would still be unable to get that access if the teachers were online. I'm both an optimist and realist and I am hopeful that we can make it through the year without distance learning but also understand why that will be difficult. Related, ongoing online grades were for grades 7 – 8 last year and will be for grades 5 – 8 this year. The middle school teachers and I did discuss improving in this area. In the back to school packet that will be picked up on the 25th, there will be additional information on online grading as well as additional changes that we will be making largely in the middle school. These are predominately areas that we tried in the spring that either went well or items that clearly did not, and thus we will have a better strategy.

In the event of a positive COVID-19 case, Marathon County Health Department (MCHD) will make a phone call to the parent to start a Contact Investigation. If/When close contacts within the school are identified, St. Mary's School will provide contact information for the parents of the students who are determined to be close contacts.

You are a "close contact" if **any** of the following situations happened while you spent time with the person with COVID-19, even if they didn't have symptoms:

- Had direct physical contact with the person (for example, a hug, kiss, or handshake).
- Were within 6 feet of the person for a total of more than 15 minutes in a single day.
- Had contact with the person's respiratory secretions (for example, coughed or sneezed on; contact with a dirty tissue; shared a drinking glass, food, towels, or other personal items).
- Live with the person or stayed overnight for at least one night in a household with the person.
- Source: <https://www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/covid-19/diagnosed.htm>

Close contacts will be quarantined from the last day of exposure to the COVID+ individual. The COVID+ person has to quarantine with their household members. However, only the close contact of the COVID+ individual must quarantine (not the close contact's household members). A letter will be sent to the school community regarding the positive case. Exclusion criteria is provided by the WI Department of Health Services, and may change quickly.

If, during the school day, a student appears to have an illness or symptoms (training by Marathon County Health Department provided), the school will follow the Protocol to Send Home decision tree developed by the Wisconsin DPI to determine if the student should go home or not. If sent home the student cannot return until 24 hours of improving health in relation to the symptoms have occurred or a negative COVID test and no exposure to anyone with COVID has occurred. Please note: This means if a child is sent home at 10 AM on Tuesday they can not be at school at 8 AM on Wednesday. These criteria also have changed in the past and may change quickly.

On back to school day on the 25th, some of you may want to drop off supplies, take pics (please sign up if you haven't already) and leave while others may want to stay longer. Either way, it will be a good way to process some of the anxiety and excitement people are feeling so we are looking forward to seeing you then.

Sincerely,

Mr. Koch
Principal

St. Mary's School ♦ 716 Market Street, Marathon, WI 54448 ♦ Phone: (715) 443-3430