



July 29, 2020

*"The laborers in the Lord's vineyard should have one foot on the ground,
and the other raised to proceed on their journey." --St. Ignatius of Loyola*

Dear Families,

The year 2020 has certainly presented all of us with a unique journey! At Storm Lake St. Mary's, we are excited and ready to continue our partnership with your family. We would like to update you on our preparations for the 2020-2021 school year in light of the COVID-19 pandemic. Our school has been working diligently to create a return-to-learn plan and re-opening guidance to ensure your family continues to receive a safe and sound Catholic education that meets your child's and family's spiritual, emotional, and intellectual needs.

Living Our Mission

In this school family, we believe that we are better together because we are a family; indeed, we are many parts of one Body of Christ. We believe that we grow in our relationship with God by learning about God's creation: the world, the people in it, and ourselves. We are always learning, and we believe that we learn better together.

To that end, it is our goal to begin the school year on August 24 with on-site instruction. With this in mind, we are committed to providing a quality Catholic education, regardless of the mode of delivery used. The education your child receives from Storm Lake St. Mary's is distinct, as our Catholic beliefs, traditions, and teachings are deeply embedded in daily instruction. School staff is prepared to continue this for the 2020-21 school year.

We are committed to offering the highest level of education possible by focusing directly on the social, emotional, faith, and intellectual needs of each child.

- Religion classes and prayer opportunities will be held daily.
- Teachers will have daily communication and interaction with all students.
- Catholic beliefs, traditions, and teaching will continue to be deeply embedded in daily instruction.
- Mass will be celebrated.
- Service opportunities will be available for all students.
- Core classes will be taught daily.
- Grades 3-12 will have individual Chromebooks to prevent the sharing of devices

Three Modes of Delivery

We have prepared three models for instruction in order to be prepared for the unknown of the next school year. Each one is described below.

On-Site Learning

This model indicates services are offered within the school building. It is our goal to begin the school year on August 24 with on-site learning. To meet this goal, we have planned for additional cleaning, social distancing, training, and health/safety plans.

Hybrid Learning

This model indicates services are offered both remotely and on-site. This model may be used to address specific student health concerns and a lack of readiness to return to the onsite model, as well as state mandates for social distancing, etc. Students using remote virtual learning will utilize Google, Zoom, SeeSaw, etc. for instruction. Please contact Mrs. Swanson or Mr. Berg if you are interested in this option.

Continuous Online Learning

This model indicates services will be held remotely for all students. Virtual learning will be used in emergency situations when on-site learning is not possible. When students are using remote virtual learning they will utilize Google, Zoom, SeeSaw, etc. for instruction.

Health and Safety

We recognize it is not possible to eliminate all COVID-19 exposure risks. However, we are working diligently to mitigate as many risks as possible with the understanding that **we rely on you, our families, to do their part to help keep our school community safe and allow us to remain on-site.** We will be implementing the following health and safety strategies to make our school as safe as possible:

Screening

- Children and staff must be screened at home before leaving for school. If they exhibit any of the following symptoms, **they must stay home:**
 - Fever or chills (temperature of 100.3 or above)
 - Cough
 - Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing
 - Fatigue
 - Muscle or body aches
 - Headache
 - New loss of taste or smell
 - Sore throat
 - Congestion or runny nose
 - Nausea or vomiting
 - Diarrhea
- If a temperature is discovered at school, the child or staff member will be kept away from others and expected to leave as soon as possible.

Face Coverings

- Students (grades K-12) and staff should wear face coverings or masks upon entering and exiting the building, in hallways, and in common areas (library, commons, Mass, etc.). Masks are not required while students are able to socially-distance in classrooms.
- Lessons and instructions will be provided to students on the appropriate use of face coverings, as well as the prevention of stigmas associated with use or non-use of face coverings.

Cleaning and Disinfecting

- Frequent cleaning and disinfecting procedures will be implemented.

Hand Washing and Personal Hygiene

- Hand washing will be done several times a day
- Hand sanitizer and tissues will be available in multiple places in the classrooms and school.

Limiting Exposure

- We will limit school visitors and access to the school building.
- Staff continues to plan how to reconfigure and utilize building space to provide for as much social distancing as possible. We plan to utilize the parish hall and church to maximize our space for social distancing.
- Cohorts will be used wherever possible to keep small groups of students together and limit exposure to other groups of students. This will occur for lunch, recess, art, music, etc.
- Schools will develop protocols for isolation and discharge of students who become sick during the school day. Separate spaces will be created for ill students to wait for pickup where possible.
- We will share specific details regarding arrival and departure as the start of school gets closer

Exposure

- All positive cases of COVID-19 will be reported to Buena Vista County Public Health. We will follow their guidance for notification, contact tracing, cleaning, and closure.

Training

- All school staff will complete the [AEA Learning Health and Safety Modules](#) on best health and safety practices for schools.

What You Can Do

We are excited to have your children back and hope they are as well. Please understand that we are making the best decisions we can for all involved. We know that not everyone will be happy or agree with all of our decisions. Their attitude about school will directly correlate with yours, so we ask that you please share questions or concerns with us as they arise.. Below are a few other things you can do to help our school community:

- Talk to your child about how school will look differently and discuss health and safety measures with them as we provide them to you . Please view pictures, videos, or posts shared by our school and teachers showing classroom configurations and other helpful information.
- Continue to read school communications as more information becomes available.
- At the Panther Fair (Tuesday, August 4: 12 pm - 6 pm or Wednesday, August 5: 8 am - 2 pm) please complete registration accurately and make sure your contact information is up to date in case we need to communicate with you. If you can not attend the Panther Fair, please contact the school office at 712-732-4166 to make arrangements to complete necessary paperwork.
- **Please keep your child at home if they do not feel well.** It is important to keep your child home if they have a temperature above 100.3. Please do not give fever-reducing medication and send your child to school.
- Report any exposure or positive cases to **the school office** immediately at **(712-732-4166)**
- Please contact Mrs. Swanson or Mr. Berg to request to be part of our hybrid model if your child can not attend on-site
- Please reach out with any questions or concerns. Our school staff is here to help!

Our school team continues to receive information almost daily from the Iowa Department of Education, Iowa Department of Public Health, CDC, Diocese of Sioux City Catholic Schools Office, and the Buena Vista County Public Health Department. Please know that plans and guidance may change as more information is received. Our local return-to-learn committee will continue to review this information in order to welcome your child back to school as safely as possible. Thank you for entrusting us with your most precious gift.

Sincerely,

Father Lingle
President

Mrs. Swanson
PK-5 Principal

Mr. Berg
6-12 Principal