



ST. MARK Catholic School

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2020-2021 Parent/Student Handbook Addendum: *ST. MARK* Catholic School Re-Opening Guidelines

Includes information from the COVID-19 Mitigation Health Plan for Phases 2 & 3: August 2020

Amended on March 3, 2021 to reflect implementation of waiver to allow for more in-person learning in grades 5-8

Background

Decisions regarding the plan to re-open ST. MARK Catholic School (SMCS) were made collaboratively with the pastor, school administration, teachers, and parents. A task force of parents, teachers, and administrators (including the school nurse) met weekly throughout the summer of 2020, as did an internal task force of teacher representatives and administrators, to formulate the best plan for SMCS and to address concerns. Information on our progress, the variance letter from Diocese of Arlington Superintendent Dr. Vorbach, and various options for re-opening were emailed to parents in late June and early July. A parent meeting was hosted by the principal on July 7, and a recording of that meeting was made available to all parents the following morning. A school survey was sent to parents requesting their input on the options for re-opening. The plan that was put into place to start the school year reflected the work of both the parent and school task forces as well as the results of the parent survey. We thank everyone for their dedication to SMCS and their help in creating the best re-opening plan for our students, faculty, and families.

Point of Contact: All questions about this plan can be directed to Mrs. Kimberly Parker, Principal, *ST. MARK* Catholic School, 9972 Vale Rd., Vienna, VA 22181, 703-281-9103, kparker@stmark.org.

Guiding Principles

- SMCS greatly values parent and teacher input, which has been essential in developing this plan, and will continue to seek their input throughout the school year.
- Parents and teachers indicated, by sizable majorities in their respective groups, that they want SMCS to follow CDC and local health guidelines.
- The school will benefit from a plan that allows us the ability and flexibility to pivot at a moment's notice should conditions and health guidelines change.

- The plan should provide the maximum in-person instruction time possible while also ensuring teachers collaborative planning time, maintaining adherence to CDC and local health guidelines, and working within the school's restrictions on space and budget.
- While the school cannot make guarantees regarding the health of any individual, the safety of students, teachers, and families is of utmost importance in formulating this plan.

Reopening Plan

On August 31, 2020, SMCS opened our school building for the 2020-2021 school year with a focus on re-opening smartly and safely. **As stated in the original addendum**, as health conditions warranted and school procedures proved effective, **the school worked** to increase in-person instruction, particularly for the students in grades 5 – 8.

Tuesday-Friday of the first week of school was a half-day (ending at 12:25pm) and all students, including students in grades K-4, were on the Blue/Gold schedule that week to allow teachers to work with smaller groups of students to acclimate them to the new school year, new routines, and our new learning management system, Schoology.

The original re-opening plan follows. It provided for maximum in-person instruction while also following the **June and August 2020** guidelines from the CDC, Commonwealth of Virginia, and local health department for Phase 2 and Phase 3 re-opening. The school's physical limitations on space and budget were also factored into this plan. Mondays are dedicated to maintaining skills with Zoom/Conference learning, attending Mass in person with their families or online with their classmates via Zoom/Conference, and ensuring teachers have collaborative planning time and time for professional development. The plan also provides families with maximum choice and flexibility for continuous learning throughout the school year as they consider their own family's health and comfort with in-person instruction.

- On Mondays, all students will participate in a half-day of distance learning. Teachers will participate in collaborative planning, professional development, and attend necessary meetings from 1:30 – 3:30pm.
- Students in grades K – 4 will attend school for full days of in-person instruction from Tuesday – Friday.
- Students in grades 5 – 8 will attend school for full days of in-person instruction in their Blue and Gold groups on alternating days from Tuesday – Friday.

Our amended plan for 2020 – 2021, which will allow for a staggered return of all students in grades 5 – 8 for in-person learning, follows. As space limitations remain a challenge, SMCS must submit a “notice of intent to vary” from state guidance with the Virginia Council of Private Education (VCPE) in regard to physical distancing in the classroom. This decision was made with the input of multiple stakeholders, including but not limited to administration, the pastor,

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faculty, staff, and parents. A faculty meeting was held on January 25, 2021, to propose the change in our original plan, and a survey was sent to all faculty and staff following that meeting. On February 18, 2021, a parent meeting was hosted by our PTPO with guest speakers from the Fairfax County Health Department and the possible changes to our current plan were presented. A recording of that meeting was made available to parents the following day along with a survey asking for parent input on the suggested changes, which includes moving seats closer together than the recommended 6 feet. The faculty and parent surveys showed that both groups support the proposed changes by large majorities.

Amendment to the original plan:

- Students in grades 5 – 8 will attend school for full days of in-person instruction Tuesday through Friday.
 - All grade 8 students may attend in-person learning four days a week beginning March 9.
 - All grade 5 students may attend in-person learning four days a week beginning March 23.
 - All grade 7 students may attend in-person learning four days a week beginning April 13.
 - All grade 6 students may attend in-person learning four days a week beginning April 20.
- Seats in grades 5 – 8 only may be moved to a distance of less than 6 feet, but no less than 3 feet for the remainder of the 2020 – 2021 school year.
- The school will submit a “notice of intent to vary” with the VCPE.
- Before their child returns to 4 days of in-person instruction, parents/guardians of students in grades 5 – 8 will submit a new signed agreement form to acknowledge receipt of the amended addendum and agree to follow the policies therein.

Communications

Communication with all stakeholders has been ongoing and in various forms since June and has continued throughout the school year as needed. Parent meetings and surveys will continue as needed to evaluate the plan, address concerns, and share information. Email has been and will continue to be employed throughout the year as our main form of communication to keep all stakeholders informed.

To ensure common knowledge and understanding of the COVID-19 mitigation strategies detailed in this plan, we have done the following:

- Develop and provide both in-person and video trainings and orientations for staff and students on the specifics of our COVID-19 mitigation strategies.

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- Create simple visuals related to COVID-19 that are appropriate for children and can be shared and posted throughout the school building.
- Clearly communicate policies for when a student or staff member should stay home, go home early, and return to school requirements with parents and/or guardians and staff.
- Provide regular feedback and updates dedicated to addressing COVID-19 concerns and updates to our faculty/staff.
- Create a school handbook addendum that will be distributed to staff and parents at the beginning of school clarifying policies for when a student should stay home, including a fever threshold of 100.4, and specific policies for the return to campus. As with the regular school handbook, the addendum will require signature from faculty, staff, and parents.
- Meetings were scheduled with *ST. MARK* families to discuss COVID-19 specific policies and procedures prior to the start of the school year.

Maintaining the Health of the School Community

Daily Health Screenings

All staff, students, and visitors to campus complete a daily health screening consisting of the CDC COVID-19 questions and a temperature check or attestation prior to being admitted to the school building.

We ask that all student and staff absences be discussed with the school nurse. Teachers and staff are encouraged to stay home if they are not feeling well and options are provided on a case-by-case basis to work and/or teach remotely if appropriate.

Given that daily instruction may be accessed live from home each day through Zoom/Conference, families have been asked to keep students home if the student is not feeling well.

Entrance Procedures

Designated entrances and one-way stairwells are being utilized to control flow of students and staff and minimize mixing of non-cohort groups. Directional signs are posted to ensure correct utilization of entrances and stairwells, and training was provided to staff and students. Students and staff will wear face coverings **at all times when inside the building per the governor's current executive order, and at all times inside or outside when 6 feet of physical distance cannot be maintained.**

Students are screened at morning drop-off for the presence of COVID-19-like symptoms. Parents are asked to verbally answer a series of health questions for their child, and students have their temperatures taken with a non-contact thermometer. Students with elevated temperatures at or near 100.4 have their temperature taken a second time with a different

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thermometer. Students screening positive during carpool drop-off will immediately return home with their parent/guardian and will not be permitted into the school building. Students who walk to school with their parents will follow the same routine as students who are driven to school by their parents.

Students who walk to school or ride a bicycle without a parent accompanying them or who are driven to school by someone other than their parent need to provide a hard-copy of our health attestation indicating that the parent answers “No” to all questions asked and has been signed and dated by their parent, **unless the parent/guardian has spoken to the principal and provided written documentation allowing another person to answer in their stead.** Before entering school, these students present the signed document and undergo a temperature check. Students who do not have the paper, the paper is not signed and dated, or who have a temperature of 100.4 or higher after two temperature checks, will not be permitted in the building. A parent will immediately be called. The driver will need to remain on-site until the parent has been reached.

As a result of safety measures put in place to mitigate the health risks of COVID-19, including the arrival procedures detailed above, SMCS cannot endorse, facilitate, or support carpools between school families for the 2020-2021 school year. Carpools mix cohorts of students and could increase exposure. Parents are strongly encouraged to drive their own children to school or accompany them when they walk or ride a bicycle to school. If, however, the driver is someone other than the parent, please make sure the driver knows your car tag number. Please also notify attendance@stmark.org of any changes to afternoon pick-up, cc'ing all involved parties.

Throughout the 2020 – 2021 school year, safety patrols will not be utilized as assistants during morning drop-off nor at afternoon pick-up. Due to this as well as limitations on staff availability and social distancing guidelines, fewer drop-off spots are being utilized this year and specific doors for entry were assigned to each grade. Parents should expect delays. Morning drop-off begins at 8:00 am this year as a result. No child will be marked tardy if it is due to extended time needed for morning drop-off. They will only be considered tardy if they arrive after carpool ends.

Unnecessary volunteers will not be permitted into the school this year, and any visitors will be required to attest that they are not experiencing any symptoms of illness nor have they been exposed, and they will need to agree to and undergo a temperature check with a non-contact thermometer.

Parents are asked to schedule any medical or dental appointments for their child(ren) during the remote instructional day. If a parent/guardian needs to drop-off or pick-up their child during the school day (outside of the regular morning arrival or afternoon pick-up times), they are asked to call the school once they are in the school parking lot. A member of the staff will

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walk out to the car with the student, or will walk out to the car to meet the student, conduct the health screening, and if appropriate, walk with the child into the school.

Hand Hygiene

Occupants of the building have access to hand sanitizer each time they cross a threshold to enter the school or a new area/room, as well as when they re-enter the building.

Hand sanitizer is available at all entry points of the building, entry points for each classroom, and throughout the building. A surplus of hand sanitizer refills has been purchased and stored appropriately.

Abundant, age-appropriate hand hygiene and respiratory etiquette educational posters have been posted throughout the building and the teachers and school nurse will provide frequent in-class tutorials.

Sinks have signage providing direction on how to effectively wash hands and adequate supplies of soap are provided.

Facial Coverings

Students, staff, and visitors are expected to wear a cloth face covering or surgical mask over their nose and mouth at all times when inside the building per the governor's current order, and both indoors and outdoors whenever 6 feet of physical distance cannot be maintained.

Students in grades where seats are physically distanced from one another by 6 feet or more may remove face coverings when instructed by their teachers for snack, lunch, or to have a drink of water.

In classrooms where students are seated closer than 6 feet, face coverings must remain on at all times except when a student needs a drink of water. Students may only remove their face coverings when the following criteria have been met:

- Students have been moved at least 6 feet apart from one another.
- Teachers have instructed students that they may remove their masks.

Signs in the building, as well as educational materials that were provided to staff and families prior to the start of the school year, remind everyone of best practices for mask wearing.

All staff and faculty have been instructed in the best practices for encouraging face-covering policy compliance, including that any wet or visibly soiled face covering will be replaced with a surgical mask from the school stock. Teachers were provided with face shields, masks, disposable gloves, and reusable rubber gloves at the start of the school year.

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Windows and classroom doors are kept open to promote air circulation in the school and classrooms.

Physical Distancing

All students, faculty, and staff are encouraged to maintain a physical distance of at least 6 feet even when masks are worn. Floor markings and other visual and verbal reminders are being used to help promote compliance. Classrooms have been modified to limit the presence of non-essential items, and to ensure adequate spacing for 6 feet of social distancing **whenever possible**. Communal areas, including the Church, will be utilized by only one cohort at a time and cleaned between uses OR only in a way in which cohorts of students do not come into contact with one another.

While parent survey results **in July of 2020** overwhelmingly showed that SMCS parents would like the school to maintain a physical distance between students, faculty, and staff of at least 6 feet, **in February of 2021, both parent and faculty surveys showed a change in this area**. Beginning March 9, SMCS will initiate a staggered approach to offering in-person instruction **four days a week** to all students. While physical distancing is likely to be reduced in grades 5 – 8, at no point would that distance be fewer than 3 feet. A variance **will** be submitted to the VCPE. **Whenever physical distancing is** anything less than 6 feet **in a classroom or any other location on campus**, face coverings will be required to be worn by students and staff at all times during the school day.

Threshold for Attending School In Person

Any student or staff member assessed at the school and found to have a temperature of 100.4 degrees or higher or any other COVID-19 symptom as listed by the CDC will be sent home for the day. Students or staff who are either sent home or are absent from school with COVID-19-like symptoms will be required to provide a note from a licensed independent healthcare provider (to include a physician, physician's assistant, or nurse practitioner), indicating that said provider deems the individual clear to attend school. **The student "Permission to Return to School" form is available on the school website, and should be filled out by your healthcare provider.**

In addition, students and staff members must be fever-free, symptom-free, and have not vomited for at least 24 hours. Once the student or staff member is confirmed to be free of communicable illness by a healthcare provider or is fever free/symptom free for 24 hours without taking anti-fever medications, the student and staff member may return to school.

ST. MARK Safety Guidelines

To maintain the safest school conditions for all students, teachers, and staff, everyone must work together as a team. Decisions made as an individual can potentially affect the entire school. The goal is to open safely and to stay open. This will only work if everyone takes the

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current health conditions seriously and take all necessary precautions to protect themselves and others.

Regarding symptoms or exposure:

- If a family member within your household has tested positive for COVID-19, all members in your household should quarantine. Please contact the school nurse as soon as possible.
- Stay home if you meet any of the following risk factors:
 - Temperature over 100.4
 - Exposure to someone diagnosed with COVID-19
 - Experiencing any symptoms associated with COVID-19 that cannot be attributed to allergies or an existing health issue.

Regarding travel:

- Please refer to and follow the current guidance of the CDC, Virginia Department of Health, and Fairfax County Health Department in regard to travel.
- Be conscious of places visited, forms of travel utilized, and potential exposures to others while traveling when making decisions on whether or not to quarantine after travel.
 - The CDC has issued the following risks for types of travel:
 - Air travel requires spending time in security lines and airport terminals, which can bring individuals in close contact with other people and frequently touched surfaces. Most viruses and other germs do not spread easily on flights because of how air circulates and is filtered on airplanes. However, social distancing is difficult on crowded flights, and individuals may have to sit near others (within 6 feet), sometimes for hours. This may increase risk for exposure to the virus that causes COVID-19.
 - Traveling on buses and trains for any length of time can involve sitting or standing within 6 feet of others.
 - Car travel requires stops along the way for gas, food, or bathroom breaks that can put travelers in close contact with other people and surfaces.
- If you are traveling internationally, a 14-day quarantine upon return is mandatory.
- If you are traveling in crowded conditions (air travel, cruise, etc.), to a high risk area, or will be visiting family and friends or they will visit you, we recommend students quarantine for 14 days afterwards.
- If you are traveling by personal car, going to a low-risk area, do not plan to visit family or friends, and plan to adhere to all safety guidelines, then no quarantine is requested.
- Should state guidelines change regarding travel, such as instituting a mandatory quarantine following travel, then *ST. MARK* Catholic School's travel policy will follow suit.

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Lunch

Lunches are eaten in the classrooms or outdoors, maintaining our standard of 6 feet of physical distancing between students and keeping the same grade cohort of students together for the entire day. Hot lunches purchased through our lunch supplier are provided in sealed single portion containers. Face coverings are allowed to be removed during eating and drinking. Any wet or visibly soiled fabric face covering will be replaced with a disposable surgical mask provided by the school.

Teachers' Lounge

The teachers' lounge is limited to no more than 4 staff members at a time requiring 6 feet of physical distancing between staff at all times. There are only 3 seats available at the tables, and they have been placed so that staff may clearly maintain 6 feet of social distance while seated.

Assemblies, School Mass, and Band

School-wide assemblies have either been cancelled or delivered via Zoom/Conference. School-wide singing assemblies and gatherings have been suspended. Singing is conducted in cohorts while maintaining a distance of 10 feet or more and taking place outdoors with social distancing whenever possible.

Students attend Mass virtually at least once a week.

Band instruction is offered by the Garwood-Whaley Music Program. This year band instruction has been delivered virtually, and band performances were suspended temporarily. Currently under consideration are outdoor band practices and a possible outdoor spring concert, with physical distancing and all other health and safety measures in place.

Restrooms

Use of restrooms is limited to only 2 students at a time. Only every other stall, sink, and urinal are available to promote distancing.

Elevator

Use of the elevator is limited to 2 students or individuals at a time, and they must be wearing a mask.

Water Fountains

Water fountains are covered and not available for use during the school day. Students are allowed to bring in a water bottle from home. Students who require water for medical conditions are allowed to go to the school nurse or other designated area for the water.

School Clinic Operations and Dedicated Quarantine Space

SMCS student health services are prepared to meet the health needs of our student body, including non-COVID-19 health concerns. Additional staff have been asked to participate in

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Medical Administration Training (MAT), multiplying the number of school personnel available to address routine health needs of the student body. Additionally, the clinic workflow has been streamlined to include the following process:

- Students screening positive with symptoms of COVID-19 during the school day will be removed to the designated quarantine space in the school and will be attended by an RN prior to dismissal with parent/guardian.
- Students needing assessment for non-COVID-19 specific symptoms are admitted to the clinic for further evaluation.
- Students needing routine, scheduled medications receive them just outside of their classroom door.
- Nebulizer treatments are not be provided at school. Parents are encouraged to contact the school nurse to discuss alternatives.

The school clinic space has been supplied with procedural masks, gloves, and sanitizing cleaners. A dedicated quarantine room has been established that allows for adequate privacy for evaluation, and includes a dedicated entrance to the school building. Students and staff who screen positive for COVID-19 symptoms will be removed to this space for evaluation. The nurse has been supplied with medical-grade PPE including gowns, shields, gloves, and fitted respirator masks for RNs staffing the quarantine space, consistent with universal precautions for droplet-borne pathogens. Students and staff will be attended to while in the quarantine space exclusively by licensed health care providers or MAT-trained staff once the MAT training is complete.

Parents or caregivers picking up the student should call the school office once they are parked in the school parking lot, and the nurse or member of staff will walk with the student out to the parent's/caregiver's car in order to limit access and exposure to other parts of the facility.

The location(s) of the individual while he or she was in school will be determined and disinfected. Individuals sent home will not be permitted to return to school until he or she is fever free/symptom free for 24 hours without taking anti-fever medications, and cleared by a healthcare provider. [The student "Permission to Return to School" form is available on our website.](#)

Communicating and Responding to Positive Cases Detected at the School

If confirmed as COVID-19, exposed individuals may be required to self-quarantine and self-monitor for symptoms for 14 days. Determinations of when this will be necessary will be made on a case-by-case basis and coordinated between the school nurse and local health authority.

If one or more cases are confirmed, SMCS will work with the local health authorities to determine if community transmission is taking place. Closing some or all of the school building until a thorough disinfection can occur may be considered. Longer term closing will be

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considered and determined in cooperation with local health authorities and communicated to all families in a timely manner.

If the school is closed for any length of time, it will not reopen until disinfection is complete and the building is determined to be safe.

Addressing Emotional Needs

The school nurse, assistant principal, and student support services coordinator serve in the role of emotional support of students. Students with mental/emotional needs will be seen by the members of the emotional support team. Students will be referred to outside sources as needed.

Maintaining Healthy Environments

High Touch Surfaces

All rooms have been equipped with soap for their sinks, hand sanitizer, and disinfectant wipes. Age appropriate classroom procedures will include disinfecting desks and chairs on a routine basis. All students will have their own desk supplies for individual use.

Facility Cleaning

Facilities and maintenance staff routines have been expanded to include frequent cleaning and disinfecting of public spaces including restrooms, staircase bannisters, and hallways. Nightly cleaning and disinfecting practices have been instituted. Over the summer, the school ventilation system was reviewed by facility staff. Weather permitting and where safe to do so, classroom windows will be open when classrooms are occupied to promote air flow and circulation. Similarly, classroom doors will remain open to support circulation. Water systems were being operated throughout the summer and were reviewed by facility staff.

Maintaining Healthy Operations

At-risk Populations

In accordance with the Office of Catholic Schools policies, options were explored to support those adults at higher risk for severe illness. Efforts were made to make reasonable accommodations for this population. Offers included, but were not limited to, temporary teleworking, modified job responsibilities, and modified working hours depending on the employee's role in the school. Sick leave policies have been expanded to allow flexibility for faculty and staff.

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Faculty and staff members have been identified who will be able to serve as substitute teachers and push into classrooms as necessary. Parents have been employed as substitute teachers in their respective child/ren's grades.

Students who are at a higher risk for severe illness from COVID-19 have been provided the option to participate in full-time distance learning consistent with the pace and curriculum of their brick and mortar peers. Additional sick leave policies, as well as student absentee processes and practices have been developed. These practices encourage faculty, staff and students to stay home or self-isolate when they are sick or have been exposed to COVID-19.

Students with health conditions that are exacerbated by wearing a face covering will be allowed frequent mask breaks throughout the day. Parents should contact the school nurse with any additional concerns.

Transportation Services

SMCS does not provide any type of transportation services.

Sports and Recreation

ST. MARK Parish CYO recreational sports that utilize the gym will be suspended for the duration of the 2020-2021 school year.

Mitigation of Exposure

In the event that a student or staff member tests positive for COVID-19, the school will follow all directions from the Fairfax County Health Department related to contact tracing, quarantining, and potential classroom or facility closure. Contact tracing will be conducted by our school nurse in conjunction with the Fairfax County Health Department. SMCS will communicate with parents and guardians via email. Students who are unable to attend school in person will participate in distance learning in order to continue academic progress.

Return to School

Policies for return to class/work after COVID-19 illness or exposure require a note from a licensed independent provider (including a physician, physician's assistant or nurse practitioner) clearing them for return to the school building. The student "Permission to Return to School" form is available on the school website. SMCS will participate in community COVID-19 mitigation efforts as deemed appropriate through the network of school nurses serving the Arlington Diocese.

Community and Field Trip Activities

Additional recreational, field trip, and family activities have been suspended for the school year. No unnecessary volunteers will be permitted indoors.

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Severe Conditions

As health conditions change throughout the school year, so too will CDC, state, and local health department guidance. To allow SMCS the flexibility and ability to pivot quickly and seamlessly to a model that could require increased space between individuals, reduced capacity in the school building, or all students returning to distance learning, we did the following:

- ALL students were assigned to a Blue or Gold group to allow us the ability to make a quick transition should the entire school need to change to 50% capacity.
- Mondays were dedicated to distance learning for all so that teachers in all grade levels can maintain their expertise in Zoom/Conference instruction and students will maintain their proficiency with Zoom/Conference learning.

The **original** school re-opening plan for SMCS allows us to revert to Phase 2 guidelines without disruption. We filed a variance with the VCPE to allow for students in grades 4 – 8 to continue to attend school in-person should health conditions necessitate reverting to Phase 2 guidelines. Should we revert to Phase 1, both teachers and students in grades K-8 will participate in distance learning, the skills for which will be maintained throughout Phases 2 and 3.

SMCS Early Learning Center, which houses the SMCS pre-school program, is permitted to maintain operations during Phases 1 and 2, following all CDC and Virginia Department of Health operational requirements.

ACADEMIC PLAN AND SCHEDULE

Grades 5-8: Blue and Gold Days

Students in each grade have been assigned to the Blue group or the Gold group. The Blue group attends school Tuesday and Thursday, and Gold attends Wednesday and Friday. On Blue in-person days, the Gold group actively participates in class instruction along with their peers, but doing so via Zoom/Conference from home. Teachers are able to see and interact with students participating from home via Zoom/Conference, as well as those in the classroom. On Gold in-person days, the blue group participates in the classes from home via Zoom/Conference. All of these days are protected instructional days, meaning NO Veterans' Day, no ½ days, no professional development days for teachers (except those mandated by OCS). Students follow a regular schedule of full-day instruction.

Once students start returning to 4 days of in-person instruction in grades 5 – 8, students will only be asked to return to their Blue and Gold days if there is a serious health concern or due to non-compliance with the school's health protocols concerning face coverings, physical distancing, etc.

To maintain the safest school conditions for all students and teachers, a strict adherence to all health protocols is of great importance in classrooms where seats will now be closer than 6

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feet. Students who repeatedly and flagrantly disregard health protocols despite multiple reminders from faculty and staff over multiple days (e.g. 3 days within a two-week period), will be asked to return to the Blue/Gold schedule for two weeks. If the disregard for following the school's health protocols persists while on the Blue/Gold schedule, the student will be asked to move to online learning for two weeks. Once the student returns to in-person learning Tuesday – Friday, if the unsafe behavior continues, the student may be asked to move back to online learning for the remainder of the year. Parents will be notified if there is ever a day that multiple reminders were necessary for multiple infractions.

Monday Instruction

On Mondays there is a ½ day of online instruction via Zoom. Students attend Mass via Zoom/Conference with their teacher and class or can attend with parents in person. This day was chosen as the best day to set aside for teacher development and planning since most federal holidays fall on Mondays. Thanksgiving, Christmas, and Easter holidays already on the calendar will not change.

Online Instruction

Online classes are real-time interactive classes via Zoom/Conference. Teachers set up their laptops or webcams to face the ActivPanel (or whiteboard) while they teach. Teachers are able to set up their laptops and webcams so that they can see the students physically in the classroom *as well as* the students Zoom/Conferencing in from home. Students access their classes at their regularly scheduled times through Schoology. Instruction was provided to students on how to use Schoology during the first weeks of school.

For class discussions, the cameras can be turned to face the entire class. Teachers check within the classroom for questions, and the Zoom/Conference room for questions.

Expectations for Online Learning and Participation:

- Online school hours are normal school hours and students at home are expected to participate in their regularly-scheduled classes and attendance is taken.
- Students are expected to wear at least their uniform shirt and be seated in an appropriate location for learning (preferably not a bed).
- Students should always have their camera on unless specifically told otherwise by their teacher (for example, it may be necessary in some instances to lower the stress on the wife).
- Students must sign in and join the class with their first and last name. Students will not be admitted into the online session otherwise.
- Students should remain muted unless they are asking a question, responding to a question from the teacher, or participating in a class discussion.
- Online learning will NOT simply be lessons posted and students just completing work. Students will be participating in the lessons in real-time and have a break for

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lunch and recess as well. Mini brain and stretching breaks will be provided to all students—at home and in the classroom—throughout the day.

Books and Supplies

Student desks are sanitized each evening by a professional cleaning company. Lockers are not in use due to spacing and cleaning issues. As a result, children keep their backpacks with them throughout the day while in school, and bring all necessary books home with them each afternoon. This has created heavy backpacks. As a result, for this year we have rescinded our rule on rolling backpacks, we provided the ISBNs for all textbooks should parents/guardians wish to purchase an extra set to be kept at home, we investigated which textbooks offer online versions, and we have asked teachers to identify which books can be left at home and which can be left in school. Leaving books on a shelf in the classroom or wrapped securely in a plastic bag in desks that are not shared (to protect them from the nightly sanitization) are options as well.

Student classroom limitations

When in school, students remain in homerooms and teachers—including Spanish and Core Plus teachers—travel to them. Spanish and some Core Plus classes are also offered online so that students can actively participate via Zoom/Conference from home. PE has been offered to both Blue and Gold as in-person classes utilizing our beautiful outdoor space. When in the classroom, students have been spaced 6 feet apart as currently recommended by the CDC and Fairfax County Health Department. Beginning March 9, students in grades 5 – 8 will start attending 4 days per week for in-person instruction (return schedule for grades 5-8 can be found on page 3). In order to accommodate all students, SMCS will implement the waiver to vary from the recommended 6 feet of physical distance and place desks closer as needed, but never at a distance of less than 3 feet.

Students and staff are expected to wear a cloth face covering or surgical mask over their nose and mouth at all times when inside the building per the governor's current order, and both indoors and outdoors whenever 6 feet of physical distance cannot be maintained. In grades where students are physically distanced from one another by 6 feet or more, students may remove face coverings with teacher permission for snack, lunch, or to have a drink of water. In classrooms where students are seated closer than 6 feet, face coverings must remain on at all times except when a student needs a drink of water. Students may only remove their face coverings when the following criteria have been met:

- Students have been moved at least 6 feet apart from one another.
- Teachers have instructed students that they may remove their masks.

Lunches may be eaten in classrooms where 6 feet of physical distance exists between students. In classrooms where there is less than 6 feet of physical distance, lunch will be eaten outdoors where students can be spaced at least 6 feet apart. If outdoor conditions are poor, ½ of the students in these classrooms will eat at their desks and be spaced at least 6 feet apart, and ½

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will eat in the hallway spaced at 6 feet or more and sitting on towels brought in from home. Recess for all will be outdoors (weather permitting).

In order to meet the needs of our middle school math program and our resource program, specific rooms have been set aside for small group instruction. These rooms are cleaned before and after each use.

All proper hygiene protocols are followed and strictly enforced throughout the day and throughout the building. For example, we have controlled drop-off and pick-up procedures, windows open throughout the day to promote air flow, designated school entrances and exits based on grade levels, one-way stairwells, encouraging 6 feet of distance when walking in hallways, markings on the floor, walls, and even outside on our field to aid students in maintaining required distancing and separation of grade cohorts, and frequent washing of commonly touched surfaces.

Grades K-4

Students in grades K – 4 are able to attend school and receive in-person instruction four days per week. Research has consistently shown that students in the younger grades have a much more difficult time learning remotely, and that in-person instruction is paramount for younger students who are learning to read, developing reading fluency, and building foundational skills in mathematics. Like the students in grades 5 – 8, students in grades K – 4 were also assigned a Blue or Gold grouping that could be utilized at certain points during the year.

Students and families in grades K-4 have the option to participate in online instruction along with their peers *via Zoom/Conference from home*. See details in the section entitled *Distance Learning Option for Families*.

In order to guarantee 6 feet of social distancing space between students, additional classrooms were needed. In this plan, all first-floor classrooms, including the gym, have been reapportioned as classrooms for K-4 instruction. Because some classes needed more than two classrooms, instructional assistants (IA) were hired to help those teachers. The teachers in each grade and their IA rotate among the classrooms throughout the day, guaranteeing all students in-person instruction from the teachers each day. The IA rotates into each classroom daily to serve as a proctor for tests, serve as a monitor for any lesson being streamed into the classroom, and assist with seatwork.

Mondays

The structure for Mondays is as follows:

- Half-Day Monday with **remote** synchronous learning in the morning for all students, K - 8, with afternoons set aside for dedicated common planning time for all teachers.

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All school-level professional development days that had been previously scheduled for mid-week or Fridays were moved to Mondays. (Any Diocesan-wide professional development days remained the same.)

Distance Learning Option for Families

Providing a rich, and flexible, distance learning option for all families, grades K-4, is of paramount importance to us. *ST. MARK* families have the option to participate in the regular learning program from home via Zoom/Conference as described in the previous sections.

For families who choose this option, students will actively participate in class instruction along with their peers, but will do so via *Zoom/Conference*. Teachers are able to see and interact with students participating from home via Zoom/Conference, as well as those in the classroom.

For details on online learning and expectations, please see the section on *Online Instruction*.

Families will have the flexibility to choose to participate in this option at any point during the year. Parents are asked let the school know at least 24-hours ahead of time when they are planning to utilize the distance learning option, AND at least 24-hours ahead of time when their child will be returning to in-person instruction in the classroom after utilizing this option.

Technology Plan

Technology Vision at SMCS

ST. MARK Catholic School believes that when implemented thoughtfully and purposefully, technology has the power to enhance teaching, learning, and communication. Through the use of technology, the teaching staff will continue its mission of instilling the love of learning and creating life-long learners. Technology provides an additional avenue for communication, collaboration, and problem solving. *ST. MARK* Catholic School has a long record of strong student performance and growth. This plan is intended to bridge that outstanding performance and commitment to educational excellence into the 21st century by updating the tools and methodology used to engage our students and transform our instruction.

Fundamental Beliefs

Computers are a powerful learning tool. It is important that students understand how to harness the power of technology safely and effectively to find answers, organize information, and collaboratively share ideas.

Technology immersion does not diminish the vital role of the teacher. To the contrary, it transforms the teacher from a director of learning to a facilitator of learning. Effective teaching and learning with Chromebooks integrates technology into the curriculum anytime, anyplace.

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By having all students use the same type of device, we not only provide an equitable opportunity for each student, but we also ensure that all the devices can be managed and maintained effectively and responsibly by the school. Increasing access to technology is essential for success in distance learning, concurrent learning, and for the future.

Additional Devices

In July of 2020, *ST. MARK* Catholic School proposed the adoption of a 1:1 Chromebook program for students in grades 1 – 4. The plan would allow students in grades 1-4 to have:

- full and equitable access to technology.
- dedicated devices that are not shared.

Parents were sent a survey that asked them to vote on implementing this plan for grades 1 – 4 for the 2020-2021 school year, and implementing a similar plan for grades 5-8 for the following year. A majority of parents in all age groups voted in favor of implementing a 1:1 device plan.

To achieve this goal, SMCS has implemented a plan for students in grades 1 – 4 to access technology that keeps student health and safety at the forefront, is financially self-sustainable in current and future years, and provides a model that can be implemented in grades 5-8 in 2021-2022.

In February of 2021, parents attended a PTPO General Meeting in which a plan to offer 4 days of in-person learning for the remainder of the 2020 – 2021 school year to students in grades 5 – 8 was explained in great detail. One stipulation of the plan is that the 1:1 model would need to be implemented for current 5th grade students this year, in March of 2021. Parents were sent a survey, and a majority of parents in grades 5 – 8 voted to accept the plan to return to 4 days of in-person learning per week.

Plan for Implementation of a 1:1 Model in Grades 1 – 5

Families paid in full to purchase a school-issued Chromebook through the school for each child the family had in grades 1 – 4 at the beginning of the 2020-2021 school year; and they will pay in March 2021 for a school-issued Chromebook for each child they have in grade 5 who will be returning to SMCS for grade 6. Devices will be purchased and configured through the school. The school will approve, install, and oversee the installation of all software and apps.

For logistical, instructional, and practical reasons, students will use their *ST. MARK* issued Chromebook as their sole academic device at school, unless otherwise approved by the principal. It is understood that when students bring a multitude of devices that operate differently and do not have a common set of applications, it becomes very difficult for classroom teachers to plan lessons and manage workflow. In addition, one of the goals of going 1:1 is to ensure that all students have access to uniform, quality devices that last all day, and give him/her uninterrupted access to our academic tools and the Internet. Lastly, *ST. MARK* Chromebooks will be managed through the G-Suite for Education giving the school greater control over applications, data, and content filters.

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The Chromebooks will be under the jurisdiction of the school and all users will follow the Technology- Acceptable Use Policy included in the Parent Student Handbook as well as the additional 1:1 Policy Addendum. Students are responsible for the general care of the Chromebook.

- For the 2021 – 2022 school year, only students entering Grade 1 and new families in grades 1 – 6 will need to pay in full for a new Chromebook.
- Families will pay for a protective case at the time of purchase and the first year's insurance/extended warranty coverage.
- Insurance/extended warranty payments will be paid annually to cover the cost of the insurance/extended warranty. **This extended warranty payment will be due at the beginning of each new school year.**

Once Chromebooks arrive at school and are configured by the school's technology department, they will be assigned to individual students.

Students will take their Chromebook home daily and will be required to charge their device at home so that the battery is charged and ready for use the next day in school. Chromebooks may be used both at school and at home.

Benefits

- All students in grades 1-5 will have access to a dedicated Chromebook **that they can use both at home and in school, and all students in grades 6 – 8 will have access to a dedicated device for in-school use only.**
- If a family moves and a student must transfer, their Chromebook may go with them at no additional cost, as long as their extended warranty has been paid in full.
- The school will not need to manage a payment plan.
- Chromebooks support G Suite for Education and Schoology, which all students and teachers are using this year.
- Students **in grades 1 – 5** will use the same device at school and at home for distance learning.
- Chromebooks are less expensive than classic laptops, maintain a longer battery charge, and have many of the same benefits of a laptop.
- Students currently in grade 4 can continue using their Chromebook in 5th grade, and possibly into MS.
- St. Paul VI uses Chromebooks in their 1:1 program, so students going to that HS would be familiar with the technology.

The school will maintain control of all Chromebooks until a student transfers and the parents have paid for the extended warranty in full, or the student completes 4th grade/8th grade and the extended warranty has been paid in full. The school will install, approve, or oversee the installation of all software and apps. No additional apps or programs may be downloaded onto the device without school approval.

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Long-term Implications of a 1:1 Policy in Grades 1 – 8

Parents will only be asked to buy a total of two devices per child during a student's time at *ST. MARK* Catholic School (grades 1-8). For students new to *ST. MARK* in grades 4 and 8, if asked, every attempt will be made to provide a temporary device for in-school use for that year.

**2020-2021 Parent/Student Handbook Addendum
ST. MARK School Opening Guidelines**

Includes information from the COVID-19 Mitigation Health Plan for Phases 2 & 3: August 2020

Amended on March 3, 2021 to reflect implementation of waiver to allow for more in-person learning in grades 5-8

1ST TRIMESTER REPORT CARDS WILL BE HELD UNTIL AN AGREEMENT IS ON FILE.

PARENT/GUARDIAN

I have read the Amended 2020-2021 Parent/Student Handbook Addendum and *ST. MARK* School Opening Guidelines, which can be found on the school website. In doing so, I have explained the content of this document to my child(ren). I acknowledge and agree to the policies obtained therein, and will require my child(ren) to comply with the policies which apply to students.

I also realize during my child’s enrollment at the school I will be informed from time to time, formally or informally, of various changes in school and/or Diocesan policies. I understand the school and/or Diocese reserves the right to change policies at any time with or without advance notice. I further understand it is required for me to sign this form in order to continue my child’s enrollment at the school.

(Student’s Name including Grade/Class)

(Parent’s/Guardian’s Signature)

(Student’s Name including Grade/Class)

(Parent’s/Guardian’s Printed Name)

(Student’s Name including Grade/Class)

(Date)

(Student’s Name including Grade/Class)

FACULTY/STAFF

I have read the Amended 2020-2021 Parent/Student Handbook Addendum and *ST. MARK* School Opening Guidelines, which can be found on the school website. I acknowledge and agree to the policies obtained therein, and will support and enforce these policies at school.

I also realize I will be informed from time to time, formally or informally, of various changes in school and/or Diocesan policies. I understand the school and/or Diocese reserves the right to change policies at any time with or without advance notice. I further understand it is required for me to sign this form in order to continue my employment at the school.

(Staff Member’s Name - Printed)

(Staff Member’s Signature)

(Date)

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