COVID-19 Mitigation Health Plan for Phases 2 and 3
July 10, 2020

Background

Decisions regarding the plan to re-open SMCS were made collaboratively with the pastor, school administration, teachers, and parents. A task force of parents, teachers, and administrators (including the school nurse) has met weekly since the beginning of June, as has 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 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 follows reflects 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.
Planning to Reopen

On August 26, 2020, it is the intention of SMCS to open our school building for the 2020-2021 school year with a focus on re-opening smartly and safely. As health conditions warrant and school procedures prove effective, we hope to increase in-person instruction, particularly for the students in grades 5 – 8.

The following plan provides for maximum in-person instruction while also following the current 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 will be dedicated to maintaining skills with online learning, attending Mass in person with their families or online, 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 – 3:30.
- 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.

Communications

Communication with all stakeholders has been ongoing and in various forms since June and will continue throughout the summer and school year as needed. Parent meetings and surveys will continue into the school year on specific dates to evaluate the plan, address concerns, and share information. Email will 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 will do 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;
- Create one pagers, FAQ’s, and 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 faculty meetings, in-service, and professional development opportunities dedicated to addressing COVID-19 concerns and updates.
● Create a school handbook addendum that will be distributed to staff and parents before the beginning of school clarifying policies for when a student should stay home, including a fever threshold of 99.5, and specific policies for the return to campus. As with the regular school handbook, the addendum will require signature from faculty, staff, and parents.
● Create a brief “how-to guide” and/or video for students and families highlighting specific guidance regarding hand-hygiene, respiratory etiquette, face covering policies, social distancing, and hallway procedures. Families will be encouraged to read through and/or watch the material together and will confirm having read or watched it.
● Meetings will be scheduled with ST. MARK families to discuss COVID-19 specific policies and procedures prior to the start of the school year.

Maintaining Health of the School Community

Daily Health Screenings
All staff, students, and visitors to campus will 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 will be encouraged to stay home if they are not feeling well and options will be 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, families will be asked to keep students home if the student is not feeling well.

Entrance Procedures
Designated entrances and one-way stairwells will be utilized to control flow of students and staff and minimize mixing of non-cohort groups. Directional signs will be posted to ensure correct utilization of entrances and stairwells, and trainings will be provided to staff and students. Students and staff will wear face coverings when entering and exiting the building, moving through the school building, when moving within the classroom, or when moving within the classroom.

Students will be screened at carpool drop-off for the presence of COVID-19-like symptoms. Students screening positive during carpool drop-off will immediately return home with their parent/guardian and will not be permitted into the school building.

Volunteers will not be permitted into the school during Phase 2 or 3, and any visitors will be required to attest that they are not experiencing any symptoms of illness nor have they been exposed.

Parents will be asked to schedule any necessary 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 or afternoon carpool times), they will be asked to call the school once they are in the school parking lot. A member of the staff will 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 will be required to use 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 will be 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 will be posted throughout the building and the teachers and school nurse will provide frequent in-class tutorials.

Washing with soap and water will be encouraged as the primary means of hygiene, and sinks in each classroom will be utilized throughout the day. Regular and thorough hand washing will become part of each class’s daily routine. All sinks will have signage providing direction on how to effectively wash hands and adequate supplies of soap will be provided.

**Facial Coverings**
Students, staff, and visitors will be expected to wear a cloth face covering or surgical mask over their nose and mouth when not socially distanced from one another by at least 6 feet, when entering and exiting the building, when walking in the hallways, or when moving within a classroom.

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

All staff and faculty will be 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. Face coverings will be removed when eating, drinking, or vigorously active while socially distanced *more than 6 feet*. Teachers will be provided face shields and masks, and only permitted to remove their masks/shields when providing instruction, provided they are a minimum of eight feet away from any other occupant of the room. Teachers will also be provided with disposable gloves.

Students will be allowed to remove face coverings only once seated and at least 6 feet apart from one another, or when outside and *more than* 6 feet apart from one another. Students and staff will be encouraged to wear face coverings even when seated and 6 feet apart to promote healthy practices.
Where safe to do so, windows and classroom doors will be open to promote air circulation in the school and classrooms.

**Physical Distancing**
All students, faculty, and staff will maintain a physical distance of at least 6 feet. Floor markings and other visual and verbal reminders will be given to ensure all students and staff are in compliance. Classrooms have been modified to limit the presence of non-essential items, and to ensure adequate spacing for 6 feet of social distancing. Communal areas, including the gymnasium and 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.

Parent survey results overwhelmingly show that SMCS parents would like the school to maintain a physical distance between students, faculty, and staff of at least 6 feet. If, at any point during the school year, SMCS parents and staff choose to reduce social distancing, at no point would that distance be fewer than 3 feet. If social distancing should be anything less than 6 feet, 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 99.5 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.

In addition, students and staff members must be fever-free, symptom-free, and have not vomited for at least 24 hours. Once the student and 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.

**Lunch**
Lunch will be eaten in the classrooms, maintaining our standard of 6 feet of social distancing between students and keeping the same cohort of students together for the entire day. Hot lunches purchased through our lunch supplier will be provided in sealed single portion containers. Face coverings will 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 will be limited to no more than 4 staff members at a time requiring 6 feet of social distancing between staff at all times. There will only be 3 seats available at the tables, and they will be marked so that staff may clearly maintain 6 feet of social distance while seated.
**Assemblies and School Mass**
School-wide assemblies will either be cancelled or delivered via Zoom. School-wide singing assemblies and gatherings will be suspended. Singing will be conducted in cohorts while maintaining a distance of 10 feet or more and taking place outdoors with social distancing whenever possible.

Students will attend Mass virtually at least once a week.

**Restrooms**
Use of restrooms will be limited to only 2 students at a time, and only every other stall, sink, and urinal will be available to promote distancing.

**Elevator**
Use of elevator will be limited to 1 student or person at a time.

**Water Fountains**
Water fountains will be covered and not available for use during the school day. Students will be allowed to bring in a water bottle from home. Students who require water for medical conditions will be 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. CARES Act money has been earmarked to train additional staff in 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 will be admitted to the clinic for further evaluation;
- Students needing routine, scheduled medications will receive them just outside of their classroom door.
- Nebulizer treatments will not be provided at school. Parents will be encouraged to contact the school nurse to discuss alternatives.

The school clinic space will be supplied with procedural masks, gloves, and sanitizing cleaners. A dedicated quarantine room has been established that will allow 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 quarantine space will be outfitted 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.

Parents or caregivers picking up the student will 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.

**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 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 will serve in the role of emotional support of students. A decision tool will be provided to teachers to screen whether a student is experiencing symptoms of anxiety or other mental health complications versus symptoms of a physical ailment. 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 deep cleaning and disinfecting practices will be instituted. Over the summer, the school ventilation system will be reviewed by service technicians and 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 are being operated throughout the summer and will be reviewed by service technicians and facility staff.

Maintaining Healthy Operations

At-risk Populations
In accordance with the Office of Catholic Schools policies, options will be explored to support those adults at higher risk for severe illness. Efforts will be made to make reasonable accommodations for this population. Offers may include, but not be limited to, teleworking, modified job responsibilities, and modified working hours. Sick leave policies have been expanded to allow flexibility for faculty and staff.

Faculty and staff members have been identified who will be able to serve as substitute teachers and push into classrooms as necessary.

Students who are at a higher risk for severe illness from COVID-19 will be 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.

Transportation Services
SMCS does not provide any type of transportation services.

Sports and Recreation
ST. MARK Parish CYO recreational sports will be suspended for the duration of phase 3.

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 Department of Health 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 intends to 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 school building. 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 will be suspended for the duration of Phase 2 or 3. No volunteers will be permitted indoors during Phase 2 or 3.

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 plan the following:

- ALL students will be 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 will be dedicated to distance learning for all so that teachers in all grade levels can maintain their expertise in online instruction and students will maintain their proficiency with online learning.

The school re-opening plan for SMCS, in its current state, allows us to revert to Phase 2 guidelines without disruption. We will file 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 Phase 3.

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