

Dear Parents,

Thank you for your patience and understanding as we have continued to pray and discern the best direction for opening this unique school year. There are no easy decisions in the situation that we are in during this pandemic. The Catholic Church teaches that the parents are the primary educators of their children. We are going to lean into that particular teaching of our faith. The Cathedral School of Saint Matthew plans to give options to all of our parents, respecting each family's decision at this particular time. We will offer both an in-person option and a remote option for all grade levels. Our teachers will work diligently to give students in both situations the best education possible. In both options we are dependent on our whole community for success.

We have decided to delay the opening of school to assist our teachers to plan for the virtual aspect of instruction as well as walk through procedures for the changes with new safety protocols. In addition it will allow our parents and students to meet their teachers before classes begin.

1. August 10-14 is a professional development week for our teachers. Teachers of preschool through 8th grade students will contact their homeroom families via email or phone to set up a time to meet the following week.
2. August 17-21 is a "Back to School Week". In place of our *Back-to-School Night*, this week will be a time for Preschool through 8th grade parents and students to meet their homeroom teacher. Parents will sign all necessary forms at that time. Families can choose not to meet in person if they prefer to meet virtually, but we will still need to get signed paperwork into the office. When parents and the student come to the school we ask that each person wear masks and keep socially distanced. It is critical that we keep our staff healthy to assist in keeping the in-person option viable.
3. The first week of school will focus on setting into place the routines for in-person instruction. We want to review the procedures and precautionary measures to keep everyone in our building as safe as possible. The following is for all Preschool through 8th grade students:
 - a. August 25th - First day of school for students with the last name beginning with A-K. This will allow for the orientation of students.
 - i. We will have 2-hour early dismissal for the entire week to assist our staff practices and collaboration together. School will be from 8:15 a.m. to 1:15 p.m. (preschool 8:15-1:00)
 - ii. The alphabet division will be by the oldest child in school if your children have different last names.
 - iii. There will be no after school care options for the first week of school.
 - iv. August 26th - First day of school for students with the last name beginning with L-Z to allow for orientation of students. Same sub points as above.
 - b. August 27th & 28th - All in-person instruction students attend school. We will have a 2-hour early dismissal as explained above.
 - c. August 31st we will resume the regular school day from 8:10 a.m-3:15 p.m.
 - i. Remote learners will begin as well. We will give further guidelines during our parent-teacher *back-to-school* week.

- d. We will offer after school care beginning August 31st if you have signed up and are willing to pay the full amount. We have a very limited capacity in our afterschool program this year, available only for grades K-8. Please email Sister if you need to use this program.

Students, Faculty, and Staff will be required to wear a mask while in the building, and many accommodations will be made to ensure social distancing is promoted and enforced whenever and wherever possible. Please practice with your child proper mask-wearing and good hygiene practices. Some details for the age levels and masks will be provided by next week. Students will remain with their homeroom cohort throughout the entire day. When, and if, we determine it is possible to move to the larger grade level cohort, we will permit the children to enjoy their entire grade level for recess and lunch times.

Families may choose a virtual option for children in lieu of in-person instruction. If you are interested in pursuing this option for your child, please contact Sister Gianna Marie, Leah Richardson, or Pat Gring at the main office or via emails: sistergiannamarie@smcathedral.org, lrichardson@smcathedral.org; and/or pgring@smcathedral.org. If you marked the recent survey for Remote Instruction then we have you marked accordingly. If you marked "undecided" or "other", then we have marked you for in-person instruction until we hear otherwise. Please feel free to confirm your decision with us or let us know if you have changed your decision. I will offer a few Zoom Meeting times for early next week and the invitations will be sent out via our alert OneCallNow text and email. We will post the link on our Parent Facebook page, as well.

Please know that if St. Joseph County's COVID cases continue to move into the Red Zone, we may need to move to Remote Instruction for a time period. In addition, if at any point our necessary personal protective equipment measures are not sufficient, we will move to Remote Instruction. If you are able to purchase any extra PPE item for the school as you shop, please remember us. We have government grant monies directed for a lot of our PPE and technology needs, but it may take several weeks to receive it.

Thank you again for your patience as we navigate this very challenging situation together. Let us entrust our school year to Our Lady of Lourdes, asking her for protection during this pandemic and for healing for all those affected by COVID.

In the Heart of Jesus,

Sister Gianna Marie
Principal