



August 14, 2020

Dear Parents,

Welcome back! It has been a busy summer. The teachers and staff of St. Patrick's have been working diligently in preparation for the arrival of your children whether in-person or as e-learners. As I start my 6th year as principal of St. Patrick School and my 28th year in Catholic education, I can share with you that this has been the most challenging time of my career. Nonetheless, I thank God everyday for leading me to St. Patrick School and for putting faith in me to lead this school through the pandemic.

For all our new families, please know you have made a very good choice for your child. This is a wonderfully devoted community of families, teachers and staff. We are blessed with a highly supportive pastor in Father Merold. This school has always had an excellent reputation of providing a strong faith-based, rigorous curriculum for their students. I believe our current faculty and staff continue to build upon that fine reputation.

I realize how stressful this time has been not just for me, but for you, my parents, my teachers and my students... however, I believe with all my heart that we will get through this time together better and stronger than ever. Depend on each other, keep praying and remain positive. Our children are watching us and so we must reassure them that it is going to be OK... and that we are here for them!

And now... I have so much to share, so let's get started...

**St. Patrick School's Reopening Plan:**

Everyone at St. Patrick School received the Reopening Plan two weeks ago. Please know over time guidelines have changed, new items have been made available to us such as decisions on sports and so it is important that everyone realize that the plan is a fluid document. I have made the necessary edits and you will be able to find them easily because I made them in red. The updated *St. Patrick Reopening Plan* is attached to this email and is dated August 14th. Please make sure you are familiar with any additions or modifications and I highly encourage you to review these new protocols to your children before the first day of school. This will help teachers and the students ease into our new normal.

**Archdiocesan COVID-19 Waiver:**

Earlier this week you received an email from me with the most recent FAQs and a waiver from AOC. SPS asked all parents to sign the waiver but what AOC is requesting is that all parents who intend to send their student back to in-person learning must sign the waiver before their child can begin school. If you have questions concerning the waiver you may email: [reopenschools@archchicago.org](mailto:reopenschools@archchicago.org). If you are unable to sign this document, then your child can move to remote learning. You must let the school know immediately. Thank you.

**Programs, Sports and Events:**

This fall trimester, all after school programs, sports and events/assemblies have been canceled. Please see the *SPS Reopening Plan* for more details

**Arrival and Dismissal Procedures:**

Very specific new details have been outlined in the *SPS Reopening Plan*. All families that will be dropping off and picking up their student each day must follow these procedures, not just for efficiency but for safety. It would be extremely helpful if you reviewed the procedures with your students prior to their first day of school. They should know what door to enter, how to line up outside while they wait to enter their door, how to socially distance themselves (standing on painted arrows in their walking lane), what to expect when they arrive at their entrance, and that they are then to go directly to their homeroom or classroom. Dismissal is less complicated for the students. Their family name will be called and they will exit out to find their parent's car.

### **Health and Safety:**

I want to assure everyone that we were able to complete the plans we prepared the first few weeks of July. All bathrooms will have touchless faucets and touchless soap and towel dispensers. We did order the UV lights to be used each night to sanitize classrooms and bathrooms. While air conditioning will be used, we will have a window open opposite the classroom door and fans will be located near the open door, pulling in fresh air and circulating it out into the hallway. Hallways, doorways, and entrances have all been marked with the necessary signage and decals indicating which way students are to walk in the hallways and where to wait in order to socially distance themselves from each other, etc... Teachers have been working in their classrooms to provide the same type of environment for safety.

### **In-Person Students' Comfort:**

We want to offer times that will allow students to get up and move, taking "brain breaks" in between classes. We have scheduled a recess period for every class each day so that they can get up, go outside and get some fresh air, sunshine and exercise. Each teacher has been assigned a grassy area on our campus so they can decide at any time to take their children outside to hold class, have lunch or just to take a break. We have purchased sitting circles for each student so they will have something to sit on when outside.

### **Masks:**

We ordered every child 2 cloth blue masks. Some of our creative teachers are working to color code the children's names by grade level and will iron the names of each child on these masks. It is important that parents wash these masks each week when teachers send them home. (Most likely one will come home on Wed. and then the 2nd one on Friday.) White paper bags were also purchased to hold our children's masks when they are removed. Our goal was to easily distinguish the mask bag from a lunch bag, so no masks get thrown away accidentally.

### **E-Learning:**

We welcome our e-learners back to school. As part of our remote learning plan all students will see a return to the expectations in the areas of attendance, workload, and grading that existed prior to COVID-19. Teachers will be communicating their lessons, assignments and assessments through one of our two Learning Management Systems, Seesaw for grades PreK-3 and Google Classroom for grades 4-8.

**Something new this fall**, e-learners will be connecting with an e-learning liaison who will be sending their schedule to their students/parents in the next few days. Mrs. Schlueter is the liaison for PreK-3, Ms. Reading (formerly Mrs. Room) is the liaison for grades 4-7 and Mrs. Berrones is the liaison for grade 8. These ladies will be connecting with our e-learners every day at a set time in order to pray, take attendance and troubleshoot any possible problems your child may be having. They will also be the middle man (or woman I should say...) between the e-learner and their teachers. The liaison will compile any problems, issues, or questions into one email that will be sent to teachers daily. This will greatly reduce the number of emails that teachers will need to open and read, giving them more time to respond to students / parents. Please note, teachers are in the classroom all day, so their response time has to be **at least 24 hours but could be slightly longer**. Classroom teachers will be setting aside a time 2 x's per week to meet with their students to review and help students with anything they may need. Both schedules (liaison's and teachers') will be sent home prior to the start of e-learning instruction which will begin the week of August 24th.

**E-learning materials and Chromebooks** can be picked up Friday, August 21st between 1:00 and 5:00 p.m. in the school parking lot.

### **Chromebooks:**

Every child will be assigned a Chromebook. Students in grades 4-8 will receive a brand new Chromebook and their leasing fee is \$165. Students in grades K-3 will be receiving a SPS refurbished Chromebook and their leasing fee is \$100 per year. Everyone will receive their Chromebooks on Friday, August 21st. Students should take them home to charge them and wait for instruction from Mrs. Orchard.

Mrs. Orchard will be providing an **informational webinar for all parents and students of remote learners** in grades K-5 on Thursday, August 20th at 6:30 p.m. Please look for an email that will provide you with the link to join. Our remote students in grades 6-8 are familiar with Google Classroom and the responsibilities of using their Chromebooks having used them in past year. All in-person learners will be provided a webinar during the week of August 24th. More information will be provided shortly.

**Discipline:**

In the most recent FAQ document, this topic was addressed this way:

*Attending in-person classes during this pandemic is a privilege. We must maintain a safe environment at all times. New policies and procedures will be clearly stated at the beginning of our time together and we will rely on all present to cooperate. Infractions of policies that compromise our safety plan will result in the loss of the privilege of in-person learning. Teachers will communicate concerns with parents and determine, once parents have been notified, if the appropriate change will occur.*

**Class Assignments:**

You should have received a welcome email from your child's classroom / homeroom teacher on Thursday, August 13th. The email informed as to which day will be your child's first day of school... August 19 or August 20. We are dividing the students into two groups over two days in order for teachers to give them a more personal welcome back while reviewing the new safety protocols.

**Faculty and Staff:**

As you have read in previous communications, we have 6 new faculty and staff members beginning with us this fall. Russell Precht is replacing Jim Stickler as our new maintenance person. Mrs. Janice Sorensen has joined our staff as a part-time nurse and aide in the Jr. High. Mrs. Linda Schlueter will remain our preschool director but will not be able to be a classroom teacher this year. She will take on a new role as the e-learning liaison for PreK-3rd grade. Juanita or "Nita" Hernandez will be the teacher for our 3 year-old preschoolers. Brittany Abraham will be replacing Mrs. Roon (now Ms. Reading), who will be working from home as the 4-8th grade e-learning liaison. Meghan McCue will be replacing Ms. Swanson (who has moved to the Kindergarten position vacated by Mrs. Mary Pohl.) And, Ms. Maggie McKinnon will be replacing Mrs. Terri Furrer as one of the Jr. High aides.

**School Masses:**

Unfortunately, we will be unable to gather in church for Mass together. Father Merold has offered to videotape his Thursday morning Masses for the children to view during the course of the week. I will bring communion to the students.

**Uniforms:**

There have been several questions around the relaxing of the uniform code for the first 4 weeks of school. We want the children to be cool and comfortable to start school under these new protocols. They need time to get use to wearing a mask for long periods of time. **My request is that you send your student in gym shorts (like our P.E. gym shorts—which can be worn by the way), (NOT capris, jean shorts, yoga shorts, etc) and a loose fitting appropriate shirt.** If your child does not have gym shorts then of course, he or she may wear our uniform shorts, uniform pants or uniform skirt / jumper with the blue polo shirt or another comfortable appropriate shirt. The vest can be eliminated until Sept. 15th. They can also wear their uniform shoes or gym shoes. Please, let's not make this desire to help our students adjust to a new normal more complicated than it has to be. I appreciate your help and support with this. **We return to full uniform on Sept. 15th.**

**School Calendar:**

The most updated school calendar is also attached to the email you received with this letter. AOC (Archdiocese of Chicago) has asked us to include 5 more professional development days into our already existing calendar in order to provide time for our teachers to prepare, regroup, and adjust as needed under these new circumstances of teaching in-person and e-learning students at the same time. Some half days were made into full days off for students and other days were added as non-attendance for students. Please mark these days in your personal calendar.

**St. Patrick School Parent / Student Handbook:**

You will be receiving a separate email very shortly with our updated Parent / Student Handbook. We ask that you review it, especially everything that is printed in blue. That is added material or edited items. We want every family to submit a signed Google document that you received the handbook and have read it.

**Volunteering:**

There will be a small amount of volunteering in the school building as we are required to keep volunteers to a minimum this year. We will have our Jog-a-thon (and we are adding a Read-a-thon) to the day. Of course it will not be like other years, but we are determined to make this a fun day for our students. Certainly, our students at home will be join the fun by participating with the read-q-thon. We will also continue with Pizza Days. These will be run by a small number of volunteers who will only be allowed in the kitchen. Pizza lunch will be delivered to the classrooms by staff.

**Hornet Hustle:**

Don't forget to register for the Hornet Hustle. It will be virtual this year. Everyone gets to walk or run in their own neighborhood and by doing so you are supporting St. Patrick School! We hope to see many videos of families walking together for SPS!

**School Theme:**

This year's school theme is "We are called." There are so many ways to interpret this... We are called to be good stewards of God's creation... We are called to share our gifts with others... We are called to be the hands and feet of Christ in the world... We are called to do what is right not just for the individual but for the common good of all. We will be sharing these thoughts and others with your children throughout the year and we look forward to what our children believe they are called to do!

So, let me use this theme as I conclude this letter. We are called this year to be the best versions of ourselves during a most difficult time in our history. I pray our Lord will keep each one of our children, their families, our teachers and staff safely in the palm of His hands. I am comforted in knowing that He walks with us. Please know the faculty, staff and I pray for you often. We ask in return that you keep us in your prayers.

In peace and gratitude,

*Mrs. Mary Vitulli*  
*Principal*

ARCHDIOCESE OF CHICAGO CATHOLIC SCHOOLS  
2020/21 SCHOOL YEAR

**WE ARE  
CALLED...**