

July 31, 2020

Dear St. Gerard School Families,

During the last week, Mrs. Wade and I have met with most of the teaching staff at St. Gerard School, who helped us with the Phase 3 plan and developing an online option and the Safe School committee, who helped us revise the Phase 4 Reopening Plan. Our goal is to provide a safe environment where your children can grow academically and spiritually.

After the Parent Poll we did last weekend, we realized that we would need to supply our community with an online option. Even though our poll had 72% of our families, or 248 students, preferring face-to-face instruction and 28% of our families or 85 students, preferring online learning, we felt that this was too large a number to ignore. The poll also showed that there was a wide range among the grades concerning who preferred online learning and who preferred face-to-face. In two classes, kindergarten and fifth grade, the respondents were almost equally split between online and face-to-face. In other classes, like 1st grade and 8th grade there were only 5 students in each of these grades who wanted online. This made it difficult to come up with a plan that would work for all grades. I know that many of you were upset, especially when you saw that neighboring Catholic schools were offering an online option. I did look at these offerings and did not feel that these programs would meet the needs of our St. Gerard School community. We went to work trying to figure out what we could do. We came up with a feasible plan, presented it to the staff, got their input and came up with a plan that is reasonable and has the backing of the St. Gerard School staff. I do want to thank the staff for their input and their willingness to take on extra work in order to help all the students at St. Gerard School. They love their students and their St. Gerard School community and are dedicated to offering quality programs. I know you appreciate them as much as I do. I am blessed to work with this great group of educators and to be a member of this faith community.

The Online Option we will be offering to parents is actually quite simple. After parents have committed to either online learning or face-to-face instruction, teachers will be given those lists and each grade level team will decide how they want to handle the teaching duties. In grades where students are evenly divided between online and face-to-face learners the teachers may decide that one of them will handle the online learners and one will handle the face-to-face learners. In grades where the difference between online learners is unequal then the teaching team may decide to split all the regular subjects (math, reading, religion, spelling, handwriting, social studies, science, etc.) according to their strengths. Then each teacher would teach their subjects to the whole grade, face-to-face, while recording the lessons to be uploaded for the online learners. Teachers would then switch classes and teach to the other group of face-to-face learners. Online learners would be able to access the lessons at the most convenient time for them. Since we do not have the capability, right now, to live stream all these classes, students will not be able to access these lessons on the same day as the face-to-face learners. The grade

level team would determine when lessons will be posted to the online learners. This will enable the online learners to receive the same instruction as the face-to-face learners. Online learners would be able to email teachers with their questions. There will also be regularly scheduled Google meets on a weekly basis. They would also be able to review a lesson as many times as needed to gain understanding of the concepts presented. Online learners will not have any specials. Because the junior high students will not have electives this 1st semester, our special teachers are taking on extra classes so that the junior high teachers will be able to have some preparation time. Online learners will return classwork and homework through Google Classroom and will receive grades and report cards through PowerSchool.

OVERVIEW OF ONLINE LEARNING

- Online learners will receive the same lessons in all core content areas as face-to-face learners.
- The online learning program will be offered for the first quarter. We will evaluate what is needed in the second quarter when the time comes.
- Online learners will be expected to attend lessons each day and return work by due dates. Attendance will be taken.
- Online learners will be given grades and report cards.
- Online learners will be able to have access to the teacher either through email or Google meets.
- Online learners will not have access to specials classes.
- Online learners will have access to all textbooks and consumables.
- Tuition will be the same for online learners as face-to-face learners. Our costs do not decrease because we do not have as many students in the building. Our costs are mainly teacher salaries and benefits, learning materials, and utilities. Also, remember that the tuition you pay does not entirely cover the cost to educate your student. The parish happily supports St. Gerard School so that all students have access to a Catholic education at a reasonable cost.

The Safe Schools Committee consisting of Dr. Jennifer Boote, Mr. Marcus Wasilevich, Katie Dotson, Karen Marshall, Shelby Hicks, Sara Wade and Ray Rzepecki reviewed the Reopening Plan point by point. I want to thank all these individuals for their time and expertise. They all had great knowledge of proper safety protocols and the latest recommendations as they have been on the front lines during this pandemic. I have also talked to the school contact at the Eaton County Health Department for specific questions that the committee had. We also took into consideration the concerns and suggestions that parents listed in the Parent Question document. Please take time to read this document carefully as there have been numerous changes. We are following as many of the safety protocols that significantly lower the risk of

transmission of this virus as we reasonably can. Where it is impossible for us to follow a certain protocol exactly, we are following it as feasibly as we can.

I also wanted to let you know that Mrs. Mary Jo Mills (5th grade) and Mrs. Sheila Iding (1st grade) have decided to retire. Mrs. Sonia Mullaney (6th grade) has decided not to return. We have posted their positions and have already received applications to replace them. We will be interviewing next week, and I will let you know as soon as a decision has been made. We are also looking for a part-time librarian to replace Mrs. Susan Smith who retired this past spring.

Lastly, after you have looked over these documents, it is very important that we hear from each and everyone of you about your intentions for your children's schooling for the first quarter of the 2020-2021 school year. We hope and pray that you will choose St. Gerard School for either face-to-face or online learning. We are proud of both offerings. If you are not happy with either of these options, then we will wish you well and pray that whatever your choice you make will be the right choice for your family. Here is the link to the survey;

<https://forms.gle/FAbfYmcxjREzFbHe8>

You will need to answer the survey for each one of your children that are in grades K-8. There is a "submit another response" button you will need to choose to enter in another child. When you have done a survey for each child, you may close out. Please answer as soon as possible. We are receiving many inquiries for enrollment, but we are not making any decisions until we hear from those already enrolled.

Thank you for your patience and prayers. Mrs. Wade and I have received so many supportive emails and phone calls. We appreciate each and everyone one of you! This pandemic has made us all fearful and filled with anxiety and many questions. We are right there with you. We hope you will join us in bringing this community together through this pandemic. This is a strong, faith-filled community and if we all work together, pray together, worship together, and treat each other with respect and kindness, we will come out of this even stronger than we could ever imagine. Remember – "I can accomplish all things through Christ, who strengthens me."
Phillipians 4:13 **NOTHING IS IMPOSSIBLE!**

-Ray Rzepecki