

Dear Parents,

As we settle into the school year, I wanted to send a note regarding the beginning of the school year.

I want to express my personal thanks to all of you for your support of our teachers, administrators, and school community as we return to school. I appreciate the support we have received in implementing our *Guide for Returning to School*. I have been impressed with the degree of cooperation I have witnessed in wearing of masks, retaining social – distance, adjusting to new drop-off and pick-up procedures, etc.

Since we have been getting some questions about how we will handle various situations, I believe it is important to expand upon some potential scenarios we may experience throughout the school year as we deal with COVID-19 cases.

Student/Staff who tests positive for COVID-19

If we receive a report, either from the health department or the parents/guardians of one of our students/staff members, that an individual in our school system has tested positive for COVID-19, that individual will need to be in isolation to prevent spread. Generally, this isolation time is for a minimum of 10 days. Once cleared by their health care provider or the local health department, they can return to school. The school will be in communication with the Joplin Health Department if such a situation arises, receiving guidance on how to proceed. The student's attendance will be marked in such a manner to reflect that their absence is COVID-19 related.

The health department will work with the school to determine if there are any people who were in close contact with the individual. If so, those individuals will be placed into quarantine.

Student/Staff who has had a Close Contact with someone who has COVID-19

If a student/staff member is deemed to have been in close contact with someone who has tested positive for COVID-19, they will be quarantined by the health department for generally no less than 14 days since their last point of contact with the person who has tested positive. Students/staff will be encouraged to attend school/teach through remote means of connecting. This may look different for each school.

Unfortunately, we do have some family members of our students who have recently contracted COVID-19. We pray for their health and healing at this time. Students in these families are appropriately self-quarantining.

In both the situations mentioned above, while safeguarding student/staff members privacy, the school will provide appropriate communication without divulging the names of students or faculty members who are either in isolation or quarantine. The school will assess the need for others to know the information prior to sharing the information with others. The need to know this information is not the same as satisfying people's curiosity regarding potential COVID-19 cases.

Student/Staff who has symptoms consistent with COVID-19 but does not have a confirmed diagnosis of COVID-19

We have had situations where a student/staff member has one or more symptoms that are consistent with COVID-19, but they have not yet been identified as having the virus. We have encouraged

people whenever possible to err on the side of caution. If you have reasonable belief that a family member may have the virus, we'd ask you to keep that individual as well as other siblings home for a day or two until the person's symptoms clear up or you've been able to determine that they don't have the virus. We'd rather have a student/teacher stay home for a day or two to limit the possible spread of the virus than have a large outbreak. If you are in doubt, feel free to contact one of the building principals and talk through the situation with them.

Student/Staff who will travel to a known Hot Spot area

We would ask that if you have travel plans out of state to a current hot spot, we'd ask that you let us know of your plans. Depending upon the activities you may be participating in and the potential exposures, individuals may be asked to self-quarantine for some time upon their return or be asked to wear their face mask at all times in school.

Communication

In the event that we do have a known case of COVID-19 among our immediate school community – a student or staff member – we will work with the Springfield-Cape Girardeau Diocesan School Office and Communications Office to share information with the broader community. Again, we will honor the privacy of those individuals who are impacted and won't share personal information with others.

If we become aware of a situation in which the Joplin Health Department has helped us to determine that students or staff members need to be quarantined because of an exposure to someone with COVID-19, we will contact families to let them know that this has occurred.

We are also working to establish a text messaging application that we can use throughout the school so that if there is a need to alert parents to a particular situation, we will have a quick means of doing this. This tool will also serve as a means of alerting our school community of snow days or other unexpected events or to send reminders. We hope to have this system developed by early October.

As we have now completed our third full week of school, we are aware that there may be times this year when we need to adjust our instructional plans – we may have particular classes or grades that need to work online for a time, etc. We have put together a simple color system that identifies what stage we are in for our schools. A copy of this color code is attached to this email. As you will note, we began the school year in the Blue Level. We hope to remain at this level as long as possible; your ongoing support of the safety measures we have implemented are an essential part of us being able to do this.

Take care,
Sr. Julie