



July 22, 2020

Hello St. Joseph parishioners,

Fr. Stan was away for a few days this week taking a much-needed rest and so I offered to write the bulletin article this week so that I could share some news with you about our parish school.

St. Joseph Catholic STEM School remains committed to providing our students and families with an educational experience of excellence grounded in our Catholic faith. Our theme for the upcoming year is, "Remarkable Together!" It will guide us as we work to create a positive and healthy learning environment for the fall. As we look to the future, we have designed a comprehensive plan that is flexible enough to be responsive to the ever-changing impact of COVID on our local community. We are creating the first phase of our back to school plan right now, and that phase will bring us through mid-October at least and perhaps all the way through the fall. We will continue to re-evaluate our plan as we learn more through the recommendations of our expert partners.

As in the gospel reading today, we hear Jesus talking about the kingdom of heaven being like a treasure or a fine pearl. Our parish school is just like that – it is a beautiful treasure and a fine pearl. We have so much to offer in terms of teaching our young families and youth about our Catholic faith. Our youth are the pillar on which we will build the future of our church, and this is a time when we need to polish the treasure of our Catholic school and wear that pearl proudly.

We, along with the other Catholic schools in our Archdiocese, are planning to open this fall with in-person instruction. Our reopening plan encompasses guidance from the Minnesota Department of Health, the CDC and the American Academy of Pediatrics and was developed with the help of colleagues around the Archdiocese. Our goal is to reopen school with protocols and procedures in place that will significantly lower transmittable health risks due to COVID-19 to students and staff. We will implement safety and health measures and place limitations or restrictions on some aspects of life at St. Joseph Catholic STEM School. We are committed to working in partnership with you and with our parents as we move forward with confidence and cautious optimism as the new school year begins.

We recognize that some students and families may have health related concerns that require distance learning as we begin the new school year, and we are prepared to support that need as well. We learned much from the distance learning experience of the spring and have taken into consideration the perspective of parents and teachers on how we can improve the at-home learning experience for those who need that option throughout the school year.





There is still much unknown about COVID -19 and how it will impact our community in the year ahead. Our plan is flexible and will adapt to significant shifts in the risk levels related to major surges close to and within our community. We will be prepared to shift to short or longer term closing of the school building based on these changes. Our teachers are prepared to adjust quickly in these events to ensure continuity in learning for our students. We will begin the year helping our students become proficient in the digital platforms that will support in person and distance learning. These are robust tools that support the organization of learning and provide the opportunity for interactive learning experiences at home and school.

Our plan creates a learning cohort model for students which will assist with limiting exposure throughout the school building. This will help lower the number of students who may need to quarantine if and when students become symptomatic or test positive for the Coronavirus. Families will need to keep their children home from school if they have a temperature or have symptoms that are potentially COVID related to protect the rest of the community from a spread. This plan will continue to evolve in the weeks and months ahead.

We are eager for our students to return to the classroom for in person learning. Relationships are vital when learning, and the best way that we can do that is with in-person learning. While things may look a bit different, we remain the same at our core: A school that loves the children of our parish and community and wants to partner with all of you to help them grow and thrive as learners and young people of faith. Thank you for putting your trust in us during these uncertain times.

We have openings at almost every grade level for the fall and we encourage all parish families to come for a tour and register to be a part of this great treasure in our community, your parish school. With all of our parishioners' support, we will be **Remarkable Together!**

If you have additional questions regarding the plan for the upcoming school year, please do not hesitate to reach out to us. The school office will remain open throughout the summer in anticipation of and preparation for the new school year.

Sincerely,



Bruce Richards
Principal
St. Joseph Catholic School

