

St. Jerome Early Childhood Center

Covid-19 Response

&

Re-Opening School Plan

2020-2021

Please note that this is a **living document** which will be revised according to guidelines issued by the CDC, the State of Florida, the Florida Department of Education, other health agencies and after consultation with the Office of Catholic Schools and Centers of the Diocese of St. Petersburg.

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August 4, 2020

Dear Parents and Guardians,

The Covid-19 pandemic continues to impact our lives as we plan how to safely reopen schools in order to provide the best education possible for our children.

Current data suggests that it is not yet prudent to hold our Parent Orientation meeting in person. Therefore, instead of meeting on Thursday, August 13, 2020 we have instituted the following preparations:

1. Thursday, Aug. 13 and Friday, Aug. 14 - A parent or guardian comes to school to pick up the Family Handbook and Welcome Packet. This includes your child's teacher assignment and necessary paperwork for the upcoming school year. The school office will be open from 7:30 am to 7:30 pm to accommodate your schedules. You will also receive your student's tote bag which is to be used instead of a backpack. It is machine washable and you are asked to clean it on a regular basis. Your child can decorate the tote bag using colorfast markers.
2. Carefully read the Family Handbook.
3. View the PowerPoint presentation posted on our website under the INFORMATION tab.
<https://www.stjeromeearlychildhoodcenter.org/>
It will be available on **August 17** after you have had ample time to review the written materials.
4. Complete the necessary paperwork in your Welcome Packet. Several papers from the front pocket require a signature in order for your child to begin school.
5. Return the necessary paperwork to school via the drop off box prior to August 24, 2020.
6. Call the office (596-9491) or email any questions and/or concerns to preschool@stjeromeecc.org

I am very grateful for the trust you have put in St. Jerome Early Childhood Center. It is times such as this when I most appreciate our school's outstanding reputation and track record of striving for excellence. I was introduced to a quote I would like to share with you from Margaret Wheatley. "It is possible to prepare for the future without knowing what it will be. The primary way to prepare for the unknown is

to attend to the quality of our relationships, to how well we know and trust one another.” The staff at SJECC will do everything in our power to provide for the needs of your children.

On the pages that follow, you will find information regarding the reopening of school, safety and cleaning protocols, distance learning, family responsibilities, and more. Although this document is designed to answer the many questions you have about the 2020-2021 school year, I want to emphasize that we still face a very fluid situation that could require us to change our plans and/or responses as we move forward. We will continue to receive guidance from the Diocese of St. Petersburg as the Task Force on Catholic Education continues its work. They will monitor guidelines issued by the CDC, the State of Florida, the Florida Department of Education, and other health and education agencies. Please be aware that we do not necessarily follow the mandates of Pinellas County Public Schools.

As we continue to plan for August, our own school-based Re-Opening Taskforce is meeting regularly to make sure we are taking into consideration the latest information available. We will work diligently to provide the best and safest learning environment for our students.

Let us all persist in prayer for one another and our world.

In Christ,

Mrs. Phyllis Steele, Director

Reopening of School

As of the writing of this document, St. Jerome Early Childhood Center plans to reopen for the 2020-2021 school year with August 24, 2020 as the first day of school.

Safety and cleaning protocols listed below will be implemented in response to the Covid-19 crisis in order to keep students, faculty, and staff safe and healthy. However, parents and guardians should recognize that entering any public spaces, such as schools, carries a risk. A **Statement of Understanding and Release of Liability in Regard to Covid-19** will be required.

Safety and Mitigation Protocols

Open House

Each student will be assigned a designated time for Open House attendance and each child will be permitted to bring only one parent/guardian. For this event, both students (except two year olds) and adults will be required to wear masks. These measures will allow us to provide a safe environment for all involved.

Daily Arrival

All families **MUST** use the carline for drop-off. The practice of walking children to the front door is counter productive as it does not allow for social distancing between families.

When students arrive each morning, temperature checks will be required. (No-touch forehead thermometers will be used) This will occur in the carline prior to the parent/guardian leaving. Parents will need to remove their children from the car seat and stand next to them outside the passenger car door. Parents will need to wear a mask. A staff member will approach to take the child's temperature. Any student with an above normal temperature will not be allowed to attend school. Parents/Guardians will also be asked to confirm that the students have had no symptoms of illness in the past 24 hours (fever, coughing, shortness of breath, gastrointestinal issues, etc.) or exposure to someone who is sick.

Once cleared, a different staff member will escort the student to class. The student will use hand sanitizer from our dispenser before entering the building. The staff member will sanitize her hands between each child.

Classes will use a staggered start schedule in order to reduce the wait time for families in the carline. Therefore, we ask that you please arrive promptly as your punctuality will effect the whole system. The class times are as follows:

8:00 – 9:00 am Early Care

8:30 – 8:45 am EC4 Classes (Rooms 3 and 4)

8:45 – 9:00 am EC2 Class (Room 2)

9:00 – 9:15 am EC3 Class (Room 1)

Late Arrivals

Students arriving after their designated time are asked to remain in their cars. The adult should call the office and inform us that you are waiting to be screened and let into the building. A staff member will come out to your car to assist as soon as possible. If you arrive after your designated time but during another age group's time, you will be asked to park and wait until a staff member can assist you.

Daily Dismissal

Carline MUST be used for dismissal. Staff will use a walkie-talkie system to quickly convey information to the classrooms where students will be waiting to be dismissed. Again, your punctuality is vital to making the system function efficiently. Please see the schedule below for pick up times:

11:45 EC2 (Room 2)

12:00 EC4 (Room 3) Half-day program

12:30 EC3 (Room 1)

3:00 EC4 (room 4) Full-day program

3:00 Extended Care (Rooms 1, 2 and 3)

Classrooms

All students will be issued tote bags that are machine washable. (No backpacks will be permitted in the classroom in an effort to limit the transmission of germs.) Parents will be asked to launder these totes on a regular basis.

Upon arrival, students will proceed directly to their classroom cubbies. They will retrieve their food items and place them in a personalized container or Ziploc bag. (See more under **Food Items**) They will then put their tote bag in the cubby, use the bathroom and wash their hands.

As usual, regular and frequent times for handwashing will be scheduled throughout the school day.

No touch soap dispensers have been installed in all classrooms. No touch faucets are also available.

Tables and other classroom surfaces will be cleaned and disinfected throughout each school day in accordance with our typical Pinellas County Licensing Board regulations. Additional cleaning methods will be employed after school hours. (See more under **Cleaning and Sanitizing**)

Teachers will implement naturally physical distancing by spacing out centers in the classroom and outdoors. Small group learning will be encouraged.

Students will have their own supply boxes containing materials for art and writing. They will also have personalized bins for individual playdough and other sensory items. All items which are not easily sanitized between uses and thereby lend themselves to virus transmission will be limited.

Student Movement Throughout the School

Teachers will train students to maintain proper distancing when they are lined up or moving throughout the school.

Water Fountains

Water fountains will be closed.

Students may bring a water bottle (preferably disposable) to school.

Throughout the day, students will be provided chilled water in disposable plastic cups which teachers will fill from pitchers. Cups will be discarded after each use.

Food Items

Snacks – Snacks should be packed in labelled Ziploc or brown bags. **All** items and containers must be labelled with the child’s first and last name in accordance with PCLB regulations.

Lunches – Lunches may be packed in a reuseable lunchbox. It will be placed inside a large Ziploc bag labelled with the child’s name and returned to the tote bag when lunch is finished. We ask that families clean the interior and exterior of lunchboxes on a daily basis with an acceptable disinfectant. **All** items and containers must be labelled with the child’s first and last name in accordance with PCLB regulations.

Playground Time

Students need playtime and physical activity during the school day. Each class will have its own playground time for this purpose. There will be a fifteen minute break between each group to allow for proper cleaning. High touch areas such as swings, slides, bicycles and climbing apparatus will be cleaned between each class and disinfected everyday after school. Other playground items such as balls and building materials will be contained in a bin specifically marked for each classroom’s use. These items will not be shared and will be disinfected at the conclusion of each day. The sandbox and sand table will be temporarily closed as these items are extremely difficult to sanitize. The water table may be used by classes and thoroughly cleaned between each group.

Prayer Services

Prayer is essential to the life of our ECC community. However, attendance in large groups would exceed the current allowable limit in the chapel and social distancing could not be maintained. For the near future, student-only prayer services will be held in each classroom as part of their regular Religion curriculum. We hope to join the entire school community together in prayer when it is safe to do so.

Masks

Masks will be a part of our COVID Response Plan in some form. In accordance with CDC guidelines, all staff will be wearing masks throughout the school day. They will be permitted to use a faceshield and

proper distancing instead of a mask when outdoors, reading stories or providing phonics instruction. Optimal learning demands that students see the mouth movements of the instructor in these cases.

In accordance with CDC guidelines, children two and under should not wear masks due to risk of suffocation. State law currently puts parents in the role of deciding whether or not their under 18 child must wear a mask. Therefore, we will support families who want their three or four year old child to wear a mask. You must supply the mask and, if it is a cloth face covering, must wash it on a daily basis. (No frightening or inappropriate graphics will be allowed.) Please make sure masks are labelled with the child's full name. We will provide instruction and equipment to help the children handle their masks properly.

We will continue to monitor government guidelines regarding the use of masks. Our policy may change in the future.

Cleaning and Sanitizing

As mentioned above, surfaces in classrooms will be cleaned and sanitized throughout the school day. All toys will be cleaned with soap and water on a daily basis and disinfected at the end of each school day. Additionally, all rooms and touchable surfaces will be thoroughly cleaned and sanitized at the end of each day. Disinfectants will be used to thoroughly clean bathrooms, high touch areas such as countertops, sinks, doorknobs and switches. Our cleaning company provides commercial-grade cleaning products and excellent service. In addition to their in-depth cleaning, we have purchased the additional service of Coronavirus disinfection through a fogging machine. This additional expense will provide for a safe and effective means of fighting the current virus outbreak.

Illness

In case a child should feel ill during school hours, the student will remain in a quiet corner of the classroom. He/she will be given a face mask and a cot and the family will be called for immediate pick up. In the case that the student seems uncomfortable or seriously ill, he or she will be moved to our designated isolation area in the front office where adult supervision is available and dismissal can occur quickly. If a student develops a fever or any significant symptoms of illness during the school day, the parent/guardian will be required to immediately (WITHIN 60 MINUTES) pick up the child. Parents should be prepared for this situation. If we detect any sign of breathing difficulty EMS will be contacted.

The isolation area will be thoroughly cleaned and disinfected after each use.

Limiting Visitors on Campus

For the immediate future, visitors to campus will be limited to only those deemed essential by administration. This may include Therapists or Education Professionals who are conducting important student observations. As of October 6, 2020, we will begin allowing more visitors to campus. This will include a photographer for student pictures and limited church staff for our Halloween parade. It will also include professionals making educational presentations such as a 9-1-1 Emergency Lesson and a Firefighter demonstration. Parents will be permitted to attend in-person conferences with our teaching staff. These meetings will follow social distancing guidelines and be scheduled throughout the day to minimize contact between people. Staff and visitors must wear a mask at all times.

All visitors will be asked to confirm that they have had no symptoms of illness within the last 24 hours, and temperature checks will be required.

Morning Care and Extended Day

Morning Care will be provided in the child's classroom. In another effort to combat virus transmission, groups will not be combined. Staff members will serve only the students in their room unless absolutely necessary. Parents must use our new carline procedures. After screening, a staff member will provide a sign-in sheet for morning care attendance.

Extended Care will be provided until 3:00 pm. Students will remain in their own classrooms when possible. There will not be any combining of groups unless necessary due to low enrollment.

Enrichment Classes will not be provided until such a time as it is deemed safe for outside providers to be present on campus.

Faculty and Staff

The SJECC Staff are committed to assisting in making our campus as safe as possible. All will be trained on the latest CDC guidelines regarding social distancing, the wearing of masks, and cleaning and sanitizing. Daily temperature checks will be required of all staff. Staff will be asked daily to confirm that they have had no symptoms of illness in the past 24 hours. Staff members who have a fever or any symptoms of illness will be required to stay at home.

A qualified substitute teacher will replace the staff member until she meets the requirements necessary to return to work (see CDC guidelines). In the extreme case, that a substitute teacher cannot be secured, the class may be cancelled for that day.

Your Responsibilities as Parents/Guardians

We all have a part to play in keeping our students, their families, and our faculty and staff safe.

Parents/Guardians have the enormous responsibility of ensuring students are not sent to school sick and for following all isolation and quarantine recommendations if somebody in the family is exposed to or infected with Covid-19.

Students **MUST NOT** be sent to school if they have exhibited any symptoms of illness (fever, coughing, shortness of breath, gastrointestinal issues, vomiting, etc.) within the past **48 hours**.

Families are expected to follow the latest CDC guidelines regarding isolation, social distancing, etc. if exposed to or infected with Covid-19. The school should be notified if a student or somebody in his/her immediate family tests positive for Covid-19.

Parents/guardians should make sure all emergency contact information is up to date throughout the school year.

(We recognize that some of our students have chronic conditions, such as asthma or allergies that will produce a cough. Parents/guardians of these students should provide the school with documentation from the child's doctor regarding these conditions.) We recommend that you have an Asthma Action Plan in place.

Distance Learning—Whole School

At this time, SJECC intends to reopen on August 24th.

All or some age levels at SJECC may temporarily move to online/distance learning at some point throughout the year, depending on the level of viral transmission in the school or local community and after consultation with public health authorities and the Office of Catholic Schools of the Diocese of St. Petersburg.

When the school previously closed, families were provided with Remote Lessons three times per week. These lessons were broad in scope as they addressed the entire school population. If we should go to a

Distance Learning Model in the future, it will be under a different format. Teachers will provide live instruction from the classroom setting for a 30 minute time period. These lessons will be followed up with activities specific to the individual age group. Adult supervision and facilitation of learning will be crucial.

Teachers will receive training during their first week of school regarding systems and apps to be used and expectations for delivery of lessons.

A tuition discount will be offered for Distance Learning if we are forced to go to this model. This option may not meet VPK State requirements which currently call for in person learning. We will closely monitor these policies and make adjustments accordingly.

Responding to a Confirmed Case of Covid-19 Within the School Community

If a student/staff member test positive for COVID-19, the school will follow the directions given by Local Health Department and consult with the Office of Schools and Centers.

Please be assured that the school will communicate this information to you as soon as possible.

We ask parents/guardians to remember that we must respect the privacy of individuals. We will not be able to release specific information if somebody tests positive for Covid-19.

Social and Emotional Supports

Since March, there has been a heightened level of stress and anxiety for us all. It is extremely important that we all remember to seek help and support if the level of stress and anxiety becomes overwhelming. This is especially important for our children. Our school will be providing lessons and resources for students and families to help cope with the current situation.

Fluidity and Limitations of this Plan

“A great risk mitigation strategy is not a static document, and should be continually revisited and revised(FLDOE, 2020, pg 41)”. It is important to mention again here that this document is likely to be revised frequently. The information on Covid-19 and the recommendations made by health and education agencies change rapidly. The Re-Opening Taskforce of SJECC is committed to revising our mitigation plans as often as needed. It is also important to note that this plan cannot possibly cover all situations which might occur; it has limitations. The administration is also committed to evaluating new and unexpected situations if they arise.

Dimmer Switch Approach

The Florida Department of Education (2020) has suggested that schools use a “Dimmer Switch” approach for their reopening plans, taking it slowly and with careful consideration. This well describes the approach that SJECC will take. We have plans to reopen on August 24th with numerous mitigation protocols in place.

As the pandemic risks lessen, we will slowly move towards more normal routines. There is no expectation or prediction for when mitigation protocols will be changed or eliminated. The safety and well-being of our students, their families, and our staff will always be priority.

References

American Academy of Pediatrics. (2020). Covid-19 planning considerations: Guidance for school re-entry.

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Florida Department of Education. (2020), Reopening Florida's schools and the CARES act. Retrieved from:

<http://www.fldoe.org/core/fileparse.php/19861/urlt/FLDOEReopeningCARESAct.pdf>

Student Decision Tree

[file:///C:/Users/roachd/Documents/COVID%2019%20Student%20Decision%20Tree%208.3.20%20\(1\).pdf](file:///C:/Users/roachd/Documents/COVID%2019%20Student%20Decision%20Tree%208.3.20%20(1).pdf)

Statement of Understanding and Release of Liability in Regard to COVID-19

