



## **Mother of God School Reopening Plan 2020-2021**

August 21, 2020

### **Mother of God School's approach**

Our goal has always been to safely open for in-person instruction as soon as is prudent under the advice and guidance of the Archdiocese of Washington and the Maryland and Montgomery County regulatory agencies. Authorities from across the spectrum have expressed that schools should start in-person as soon as it can be safely done for our children's sake. This decision must take into account both local conditions and the robust health protocols put in place by the school. As a small school we are uniquely capable of implementing a plan for safe in-person education, a difficult task for a large school. Prudent planning also requires us to be fully prepared for individual classes and for the possibility that the entire school may need to temporarily change to virtual/online learning if conditions warrant. Mother of God School has some unique attributes we have taken advantage of such as:

Classrooms and class size -- With an average class size of 15, the decision was made to take every classroom and place desks at 6 foot distances to determine the maximum number of students each classroom can safely accommodate. This allows us to have 5 day/week in-person instruction vs. an alternating A/B-day scheduling that larger schools have been forced to switch to. To accommodate our 2020-2021 enrollment by grade, the 1st and 2nd grades switched classrooms and the 7th and 8th grades switched classrooms. Additionally, the new 1st grade classroom was expanded by moving a wall 10 feet further back.

Facility -- All facility changes will be noted below but the largest advantage we discovered was the fact that 8 out of 9 of the K-8 classrooms had outside entrances. This greatly simplified planning for maintaining cohorts and avoiding the challenge of bringing classes through interior hallways. These classes will enter and exit the building daily from the outside. Students will only use hallways, in limited regulated numbers, when using bathrooms. PreK will also use particular outside entrances/exits for each classroom.

Scale -- Unlike challenges that large public and private schools face due to their large student populations, MOG School's smaller student population works in our favor. With 140 families and 180 students spread across two buildings, the scale of our school operation made COVID-19 adaptations reasonable.

## **Plan Introduction**

In order to have a safe and healthy school year in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic, we have had to review, evaluate and adapt our schedules, routines, classrooms, personnel and facility. A review of those changes and adaptations follows.

## **Guidance**

Professional guidance has been provided by research from 100's of articles and professional websites. The following are links to the primary guidance we followed relevant to operating our school in Montgomery County, Maryland.

Maryland Department of Education

[MDSE Recovery Plan](#)

[MSDE Schools reopening guardrails](#) portion relevant to non-public schools

[MSDE COVID-19 Guidance for Child Care Facilities](#) PreK and Before and After Care Programs

[Maryland Department of Health/MSDE guidance](#)- Response to COVID-19 cases in schools

Centers for Disease Control (CDC)

[CDC Preparing K-12 Administrators for a Safe Return to School in Fall 2020](#)

[CDC schools reopening resources](#)

[CDC definition of close contact](#)

[CDC- cleaning and disinfecting](#)

Archdiocese of Washington

[School Year 2020-2021 Onward Together in Faith](#)

## **Operating school safely; Guidance from the experts**

In consulting with the CDC, MSDE and Maryland Department of Health, ADW, Harvard School of Public Health, American Academy of Pediatrics etc. these same principles are universally propagated as COVID-19 pandemic public health best practices:

- Social Distancing
- Health screening
- Face Coverings
- Personal hygiene
- Sneeze and cough protocol
- Preventing cross contamination
  - Class cohorts/pods
  - No sharing of materials
  - Materials coming to and from school including lunches
  - Adults and visitors not allowed into buildings
- Disinfection
- Staggering movements of students (arrival and departure times)
- Ventilation

## **Adaptations to MOG School's schedules and routines applying these principles**

- **Social Distancing**
  - Students will be expected to remain 6 feet apart in all interactions, including traveling to or from class during carpool drop-off and dismissal, going to or from the bathroom, in PE, recess etc. as much as is humanly possible.
  - Occasional times when movement results in less than 6-foot distancing, mask wearing will provide redundant protection.
  - Physical floor markings will be a constant reminder as well as routines and discipline established by the school.
  - Teachers will provide structure to reinforce and support 6-foot distancing.
- **Health screening**
  - At carpool (or Before Care drop off) each morning a brief survey will be done including a temperature check for each student. Students with temperature 100.4 or higher will not be allowed to attend school.
  - A 72-hour fever-free rule will be in effect - This means that an un-medicated absence of fever for 72 hours will be required for students to return to school.
  - Families are asked to voluntarily report any suspicion or diagnosis of COVID-19 in their households or immediate contacts to [healthroom@mogschool.com](mailto:healthroom@mogschool.com). Privacy is protected by federal HIPPA laws.
- **Face coverings/ masks**
  - Required for everyone inside the buildings. Required outside if social distancing (6 foot) cannot be achieved.
  - Families should provide masks for their children and ensure fresh masks daily. Masks may be individualized but restrictions include: Images of mouths, Scary images or Text expressing political or demonstrative statements. Students should always have a spare mask and will be allowed to change masks during the school day, if needed.
  - MOG School will maintain a stock of new masks to be used in an emergency.
  - Breaks from wearing masks will be achieved by going outdoors, approximately every 2 hours, with students remaining 6 feet apart.
  - Lanyards will be provided by the school to clip to student's masks to allow their masks to hang loosely around their necks during outdoor breaks.
  - Families should work at home to practice wearing masks for longer and longer times. They should teach how to properly put masks on and off (like learning to tie their own shoes)

- Personal hygiene
  - Approximately 40 hand sanitizing stations have been established both inside and outside the buildings.
  - Hand washing and sanitizing will be built into our routines at least every 2 hours:
    - When entering and leaving school
    - When starting lunch or recess and whenever returning to the class
    - At various triggering events throughout the day
- Before and Aftercare
  - Limited to 45 students. Only families who have registered for some set schedule will be allowed (no drop in).
  - Cohort groups will be established and maintained as much as practical.
  - Various practices have been established to reduce cross contamination by reducing shared materials.
  - Staff will sign students in and out.
  - Drop off and pickup will be done from the newly created lobby in the gym building so as not to allow adults into the building proper.
- Carpool -- Morning drop off procedure [LINK](#), and Afternoon pickup procedure [LINK](#)
  - Carpool times are extended and students' movements are staggered.
  - Drop-off hours will begin at 8:15 and end at 8:45
    - K-8 from 8:15-8:30
    - PreK from 8:30 - 8:45. PreK walkers are asked to wait in the 2nd lot until 8:40 and walk on the sidewalk behind the main school building.
  - Afternoon dismissal hours
    - **1st carpool lot** (turn right into main lot in front of school) closes at 3:15 and releases at 3:30
    - **2nd carpool lot** (turn left at fork in driveway) closes ~3:38 and releases ~3:45.
    - **STUDENTS NOT REGISTERED FOR AFTERCARE AND NOT PICKED UP BY 3:40 WILL WAIT OUTSIDE** (penalties may apply)
- Classroom cohorts (pods) and routines
  - Classes will remain together the entire day and will not mix with other classes.
  - Students will enter and exit their classrooms from specific classroom doors.
    - K-3, and 5-8 classes have separate outside entrances in the back of the school. They will enter and exit the building from the back.
    - 4th grade will exclusively use the front entrance.
    - PreK classrooms will use unique side exits to go outside and return inside.
  - Classes will remain in their classroom and not move to other classrooms. Where relevant, teachers will rotate into their classrooms (middle school, Spanish, IT ...)
  - Classrooms are redesigned to minimize students moving about the room and to eliminate shared materials. A crate has been purchased for every student to have by their desk containing all instructional materials including Chromebook and manipulatives (where applicable). Tissues will be available for students at their desks with Ziploc bags for disposal.

- Lunch will be eaten in the classroom. Only brown bag lunches from home will be allowed initially. Everything must be disposable. Pizza Friday is discontinued for the time being. Our hot lunch caterer plans to offer individually packaged meals but this will not start immediately.
- Recess and outdoor breaks-
  - Each class will be designated a separate area on campus for outdoor fun, rotating to different areas through the week. Homeroom teachers will accompany their classes and supervise them.
  - Stretch and outdoor breaks have been added into the schedule for all students in addition to the noon recess.
- Water
  - Water fountains will be closed.
  - Water bottles - Every student must bring their own disposable water bottle from home. Water bottles may be refilled during the school day.
- Classroom windows will be open to increase ventilation and outdoor instruction will be encouraged.
- Lunch
  - Lunch boxes are not allowed. A disposable brown bag lunch is required each day.
  - Our lunch caterer, Vignola's, will begin providing prepackaged individual serving lunches sometime in September through their own ordering system on [www.hotlunch.com](http://www.hotlunch.com)

### **Adaptations to facility**

- Disinfection
  - High touch areas will be disinfected every 2 hours
  - Cleaning and disinfection after school hours
  - UVC Germicidal lamps in each classroom. Timers turn lights on and off when school is closed at night for 1 hour.
- Water fountains will be shut off (disposable water bottles must be provided by parents)
- HVAC
  - HEPA air filters installed on furnaces - changed monthly
  - Electronic ionizers installed in HVAC duct systems
- Ventilation
  - Increased use of open windows
  - Increased outside air drawn in through HVAC
- Proximity access cards for staff
- Installation of touchless faucets and paper towel dispensers
- Multiple hand sanitizer stations in every room and at all building entrances and exits (to support classroom routines for sanitizing).
- Student traffic flow patterns established
  - K-8 will enter and exit building through external doors
  - PreK classrooms each use unique doors
- Distancing floor markings inside and outside

- Signage throughout the school to alert everyone to public health protocols
- Health Room -- Set up for isolation and student protection
  - Separate HVAC system,
  - Glass door installed (so it can be closed while monitoring students),
  - Screen/curtain which can be drawn to separate students
  - Carpet replaced with laminate floor
- Parents and visitors
  - Created “lobby’s” in the foyers of both buildings to isolate visitors from entering the main part of the buildings used by students
  - Parents and other adults will not be allowed inside the buildings unless absolutely necessary.
  - Extended care and PreK routines modified so
    - parents do not come inside
    - Sign-in, sign-out done by staff
- Classroom distancing
  - Desks are positioned 6 feet apart
  - 3-4 year olds have large tables to help provide physical barriers
  - Standard classroom furniture has been removed
  - Routines changed for coats, bathroom, walking around the room and hallway.
- PreK hallway/bathroom monitor- new position

### **Nurse/Medical Technician**

- Maryland Department of Health reporting and protocols for possible COVID cases
- Additional Medical Technicians trained
- Reinforce policy for staff and students to not come to school sick and to understand responsibility to protect our school community.
- Increase the time without fever from 24 hours to 72 hours before returning to school
- Health room isolation area
- Increased use of PPE and sterile protocols

### **Cleaning and disinfecting**

Facility cleaning and disinfecting will follow CDC guidelines and utilize FDA approved materials.

[CDC- cleaning and disinfecting](#)

[CDC- Guidance for cleaning and disinfecting](#)

### **Addressing cases of COVID-19 in our community**

Mother of God School depends on the full cooperation of our school parents to support our safe environment efforts (see Liability Waiver and Protection Commitment form [HERE](#) and attached). Daily health screenings will ask questions about students and families symptoms and whether anyone in close contact has symptoms of or a diagnosis of COVID-19. If the temperature is above 100.4 or if any of these questions is answered with yes, the student will be asked to return home. *Parents should never administer fever-reducing medication prior to sending a child to school.*

Being proactive if COVID-19 is suspected -- If a student or staff member becomes ill while at school and if they meet the criteria for "COVID-19 like illness" based on Montgomery County Department of Health [Decision Aid](#), the individual will be screened by a school Medical Technician and placed in a designated isolation area.

Parents/guardians will be required to pick up an ill student within a designated time frame. You will be instructed to call the child's healthcare provider for further evaluation and possible testing.

Mother of God School will work with the Montgomery County Department of Health to determine close contacts of anyone who tests positive for COVID-19 or who has COVID-19 symptoms. Please be aware that quarantine of "close contacts" may be required. Per CDC guidance [LINK](#), this is defined as *someone who was within 6 feet of an infected person for at least 15 minutes starting from 2 days before illness onset (or, for asymptomatic patients, 2 days prior to specimen collection) until the time the patient is isolated*. MOG School protocols call for a redundancy of protection requiring both 6-foot distance and face coverings to minimize the possibility of close contact.

A case by case scenario has been provided through Montgomery County Health Department FAQ. This copy is dated 5/8/2020 and will be updated periodically. [LINK HERE](#)

### **Decisions to reopen school and decisions to switch to and from Distant/Virtual Learning**

We are prepared to switch to virtual/online learning at a moment's notice if conditions warrant at any time during the 2020-2021 school year. That decision will be made by county health authorities and we will notify our school community immediately. Particular guidance metrics have not yet been provided by the state of Maryland or Montgomery County. Montgomery County Health Officer, Dr. Travis Gayles, has requested that the Maryland Department of Health provide the county with decision criteria both for facility evaluation and public health metrics. As we wait for this information we utilize other public resources.

Public health metrics -- various metrics have been touted including local/regional COVID testing positivity rates. New York State has proposed using a 5% positivity rate for school reopening. As of 8/20/20 Montgomery County's positivity rate is 2.9% (declining 14/14 days). Confirmed cases per 100K population is another important metric. Montgomery County's current average of total new cases is 64 (declined 14 of 14 days) or 6.4/100K.  
<https://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/covid19/data/>

New York Times -- [Opening schools won't be easy, but here is how to do it safely](#)

- <75 confirmed cases per 100K people (avg. 7 day)
- Test positivity rating >5%

Harvard Global Health Institute- [Achieving Pandemic Resilient Teaching and Learning Spaces](#)

### **Online Learning Program**

In order to prepare for the possibility of having to teach students remotely again, a task force was established to evaluate MOG School's online learning program and look at best practices to increase its effectiveness for the 2020-2021 school year. The resulting online learning program can be found [HERE](#). Some features of this program include:

- Daily teaching and learning schedules (with synchronous and asynchronous learning) have been established for each age group.
- Google classroom is being more fully utilized by each class whether in school or online. Online resources (IXL, Raz Kids, Spelling City ...) will be optimized throughout the year making the flip to online learning much easier.
- Extensive professional development has been taking place over the summer.
- One to one Chromebook program extended from 4th grade to 8th grade and includes a take home option.
- Teachers would continue to come to school daily to provide online instruction from their classrooms (unless quarantined).
- Teacher's children who are students at MOG School will be supported in their online learning to enable their parents to teach more effectively.

In the [MOG School Online Learning Plan](#) one can discern the individual attention provided for K-5th grades. A strategic decision was made to break down classes into smaller groups with similar needs in order to best meet the needs of each child. The alternative would be online instruction to a class of 16 or 19, which, especially with the youngest students, is not effective. The optics of this strategy with less zoom lessons for each student and less time each day in direct instruction can be deceiving. The strategy is intentionally designed to make the best out of a very suboptimal educational experience with our students' needs primary.