

Frequently Asked Questions – Restart Plan September 8, 2020

Thank you to all those who sent in questions about St. Michael's restart plan. Below you will find a compilation of the questions and the corresponding answers. We hope this proves informative.

GENERAL QUESTIONS

- 1. Why isn't the school offering a hybrid model for students where some students come to school and some learn from home, similar to what we had in June?** In June, parents had the choice of keeping their child at home or sending them to school. At that time, teachers were required to provide a hybrid model of both in-person and remote learning to their students, but students did not attend full-time. Teachers were therefore available at some points during the school day to teach remotely, thus making a hybrid model possible. This model presented a number of challenges for many families and also for some teachers. The Ministry of Education therefore chose to require parents to choose either full time in-person learning, distributed learning, home-schooling or a temporary transition for their children this fall. Teachers in the regular in-school program are expected to teach their students in-person all day and are therefore not available to provide remote instruction as they were asked to do in June.
- 2. Why doesn't the school require teachers to provide in-person and remote learning at the same time using remote technology?** Teachers will be teaching in classrooms full time to support their students with in-person learning. There is no additional time built into the daily schedule to provide remote learning and there is currently no additional staffing available to add teachers to teach remotely. Teachers in 21st century classrooms do not simply stand at the front of the classroom and lecture, so it is not simply a matter of pointing a camera at the teacher and broadcasting remotely. In-person classroom lessons are collaborative and use a variety of digital tools, materials, and interactive discussions. It would be problematic to expect teachers to be fully present for the students in their classroom if they are also required to monitor online chats, deal with technical challenges (such as ensuring the microphone and camera are picking up the required parts of the lesson), and make certain that students studying remotely are engaged in the lesson.
- 3. Why doesn't the school have some teachers teach in-person and hire additional teachers to teach remotely so a hybrid model could be implemented in the school?** The school must operate within its operating budget and currently does not have the funds available to hire additional teachers to teach remotely.
- 4. What is the school protocol if a student or staff tests positive for COVID?** As is always the case, schools will follow the direction and advice of the Provincial Health Officer if a staff person or student has been diagnosed with COVID-19. As per our usual processes, students who are absent from school for longer periods of time due to any type of illness, including COVID-19, will be provided with learning materials to complete while they are away from school. See "STEP 7" in the school's safety plan. For information on contact tracing please see the following link: <http://www.bccdc.ca/Health-Info-Site/Documents/Contact-Tracing-Infographic.pdf>

5. **What will happen to a student's learning if the student needs to be in quarantine for 14 days?** As is always the case, schools will follow the direction and advice of the Provincial Health Officer if a staff person or student has been diagnosed with COVID-19. As per our usual processes, students who are absent from school for longer periods of time due to any type of illness, including COVID-19, will be provided with learning materials to complete while they are away from school.
6. **Has the gradual entry schedule for Kindergarten changed?** The gradual entry for Kindergarten has not changed from what was communicated to you in the Kindergarten Orientation booklet.
7. **During the school year, if we have COVID-19 safety concerns, whom should we contact?** Any further COVID related questions should be directed to the following email: covidquestions@smeschool.ca. However, please review all documents before sending an email, because in most circumstances the questions have already been answered in the information sent home. As you can imagine the school does not have a dedicated person who is able to answer every email about COVID. This can become very overwhelming. Questions specific to your child can be sent to your child's teacher.

IN-PERSON PROGRAM

8. What will the structure of the day look like for the in-person program?

A typical school day at the elementary level will be as follows:

- All parents, employees and students will be expected to engage in a mandatory health declaration process each day before coming to school, with a firm requirement to stay home if sick.
- Each morning, teachers will greet their students at assigned areas. The students will enter the school, wash or sanitize their hands and then begin the school day.
- Students will be in a regular classroom with their peers and classroom teacher and will learn grade-appropriate curriculum and be assessed in the normal fashion.
- Students will eat their lunches in the classroom under adult supervision. Play breaks at both recess and lunch will be outside. Students should be appropriately dressed as they will be outside for play breaks as much as possible. Recess and lunch play breaks will also be staggered so that no more than half of the student population is outside at one time.
- At the end of the school day teachers will escort their class to a designated meeting spot outdoors where they will be dismissed to their parents.

9. How many students will be in the classrooms for elementary school? The Ministry of Education has indicated that elementary students whose parents choose to send them to school for in-person instruction will attend full time. This means that teachers will be teaching full-time all day, and classes can therefore not be divided up into smaller groups in order to provide remote instruction at different points during the day. Students' main grouping will continue to be a 'regular' size class. Students will continue to spend the great majority of their time at school with that class. Learning cohorts of up to 60 students will allow for students and teachers to work together for learning as needed.

10. Are students expected to bring their own technology (laptop or tablet) to school? At this time, students will be using school devices. The devices will be cleaned between uses.

11. Will desks in classrooms be 2m apart? If not, why not individual partitions? Can we purchase

individual partitions for our kids on our own? Given the size of our classrooms, desks and tables will not be 2 meters apart. The Ministry of Education Guidelines state that students should be seated in consistent or assigned seating arrangements. Partitions will not be in place on each desk. Partitions have not been mandated by the Ministry for classroom use for students within the same cohort. In order for the partitions to remain safe they require additional cleaning on a regular basis, and they are limited to time spent while seated at the desk. Students will not be able to bring individual partitions, however, if a family chooses to have their child wear a face shield or any additional Personal Protective Equipment (visors, masks, gloves, protective eyewear) they are certainly welcome to do so. The PHO has said the following: "Two metres is the ideal, we know, for uncontrolled environments, particularly with people we don't know," "But one metre is also good if you're with the same group of people you know and see regularly, such as work colleagues, classmates." The classroom is considered a controlled environment; therefore, "less distance could suffice." Desks and tables have been reconfigured to allow for as much physical distance as possible in each individual classroom.

- 12. Is there any possibility to do social distancing inside the classroom?** Social distancing within the cohort has not been mandated, however, a number of important protocols have been put in place to limit transmission. For a full list of the protocols please refer to the [St. Michael's Return to School Safety Plan - Step 2: Protocols to reduce the risk \(Page 2\)](#).
- 13. The school safety plan mentions that "Classes will go outside when possible for lessons and/or play-exercise times." What plans do the school have to maximize outdoor classes - are there plans to use canopy tents?** Parents will be asked to send their child in clothing that is appropriate for outside play and learning so that the student is safe and comfortable. The need of additional outdoor learning areas will continue to be assessed. At this time, funding has been focused on safety measures within the school. Each classroom teacher will be responsible for how they will utilize the outdoor space to cover their curriculum. They will create a schedule so that each grade will have access to certain outdoor areas of the school so as to not overlap.
- 14. Although students in the same class will be considered part of the same cohort, allowing social distancing would still be preferred. To allow students to spread out, are there plans to use the gym or church for indoor classes?** The gym will be used as usual for physical education when weather for outside PE is not permitted. The church is currently open to the public during the day for worship, and use of this space would increase the risk of contact with community members outside of the cohort. Cleaning of spaces between uses is also a significant concern. The school will be focusing on more frequent cleaning within the school, rather than requiring cleaning to be spread out over multiple locations.
- 15. Given that social distancing in classrooms will be difficult (and masks are not being recommended in classrooms either), why are physical barriers not being considered in classrooms to enhance safety?** The Public Health Officer has said the following: "Two metres is the ideal, we know, for uncontrolled environments, particularly with people we don't know," "But one metre is also good if you're with the same group of people you know and see regularly, such as work colleagues, classmates." The classroom is considered a controlled environment; therefore, "less distance could suffice." Desks and tables have been reconfigured to allow for as much physical distance as possible in each individual classroom. Wearing a mask is a personal choice and if a student wishes to wear one he/she may do so. The best actions to lower the risk of the spread of COVID-19 are by practicing personal prevention practices (such as [handwashing, staying home when sick](#)) and environmental cleaning and disinfection.

- 16. How/where will students change for physical education classes?** This question is answered in each teacher's information letter home to parents.
- 17. Do you have a teaching plan for those kids who don't want to return to school next week?** Please read the information sent regarding the temporary transition option #4. Those families who choose this option, learning packages will be ready for a September 21st start. Teachers need time to prepare these packages. There will be no plan available before then.
- 18. If we send our kid to school next Thursday and then feel unsafe about the study environment, are we still able to change to transition plan (return to school later)?** You may reassess your choice to be in the transitional learning program at any point before November 16, 2020. At this time, all students who are registered are required to be back to in person instruction on November 16, 2020.
- 19. Can we send in our children to school on Sept. 10 and then later choose option no. 4 and make the transition to option no. 4?** You may reassess your choice to be in the transitional learning program at any point before November 16, 2020. At this time, all students who are registered are required to be back to in person instruction on November 16, 2020.
- 20. Where do the students eat lunch?** All students will eat their lunch with their classmates in their classroom at their desks.

TEMPORARY TRANSITIONAL OPTION

- 21. How does the temporary transition option #4 work? What can I expect from the teacher and what will be expected of me?** It is the intention of the Ministry of Education that students return to full-time, in-person attendance at school on September 10, 2020. However, some families may not be ready to have their children return to full-time in-person instruction on this date. This option allows your child to receive an at-home learning package with limited grade-level support from a teacher. It is important to note that this support will not be the same as that which was offered following Spring Break 2020. Your child will be able to transition to full-time in-person instruction at selected dates in the fall. This is not intended to be a full-year option. Normal tuition applies for this option.
- 22. How long will the transitional learning program be available? What are the re-entry dates if we choose transitional learning if we want to come back to in person learning?** Temporary transitional learning will be available until November 16, 2020, at which point the school anticipates that the majority of students will have returned to in-person learning. There are two re-entry dates available for families who may wish to have their children return to in-person learning. These dates are:
- Tuesday, October 13, 2020, with one-week notice by October 6th
 - Monday, November 16, 2020, with one-week notice required by November 9th.
- 23. If we choose option 4, will we have children at home from Sept 10 to Sept 21 and start to receive the packages from the school on Sept. 21st?** Yes, that is correct. Packages will not be distributed by Sept. 21st.
- 24. Our family understands that remote learning will not be the same as in-person learning, we just want the same resources and worksheets that students who attend school receive in school. They know they will be missing on actual science experiments and social studies activities, but as long as we have**

information about what topics are being taught we are willing to have children at home and work with them. Yes, the same material will be covered; however, not all learning opportunities will be replicated.

- 25. How will course content be delivered in the transitional learning?** Teachers will send home a learning package. It will be the responsibility of the parent to review the material and monitor their children. Once per week, the classroom teacher will meet all the students to answer any questions about the learning package activities. Students must submit the student work as per the teacher's instructions in order for assessment to take place.
- 26. Will a report card be given to students who choose the transitional learning?** Yes, students in the transitional learning will receive a report card. The report card may have to be slightly adapted.
- 27. Does the transitional learning option cover the same material as if the child were attending in-school learning?** Yes, the same material will be covered; however, not all learning opportunities will be replicated.
- 28. For students who have COVID-19 symptoms or test positive and have to stay home, will the school continue to support their learning?** Your child's teacher will remain in contact with you, and your child, should they need to self-isolate, a learning package will be provided to your child and the classroom teacher will monitor his/her learning.
- 29. CISVA is not offering distributed learning. Is this because CISVA has not applied for a distributed learning school and received approval?** CISVA is not allowed to start a Distributed Learning (DL) school. There is a moratorium currently on starting a DL school in the province. The Independent School Act states: *Independent schools may not provide the curriculum in whole or part through distributed learning.*

HEALTH AND SAFETY

It is highly recommended that parents with health and safety concerns familiarize themselves with the [COVID-19 Public Health Office's Guidance for K-12 School Settings document](#). School districts do not set health and safety requirements and are required to adhere to these guidelines. St. Michael's School is committed to meeting all health and safety guidelines as outlined.

- 30. Will schools be conducting temperature checks on all staff, students, and visitors entering schools?** In all matters related to public health, our schools follow the direction of the Provincial Health Officer (PHO). At this time, there is no requirement to conduct temperature checks. All parents and employees will be expected to engage in a mandatory health declaration process each day before coming to school. This process will be shared with all parents and reviewed with students. Staff will receive a complete health and safety orientation before students return to school.
- 31. Why are masks not mandatory in classrooms?** The district's health and safety practices are in compliance with the direction from the Provincial Health Officer. The guidelines outline a layered approach including reinforced hygiene practices, physical distancing, learning cohorts, and the use of masks for staff and secondary students in spaces where physical distancing is not possible. At this time, the Provincial Health Officer has not indicated that masks must be worn in other circumstances. St. Michael's School will continue to comply with the Provincial Health Officer.

All students and staff are welcome to wear a mask while at school. The school will be providing two reusable masks to every student and every staff member at the beginning of the school year.

32. Will masks be mandatory in common areas where physical distancing is not possible - as per public health recommendation? For example, hallways are narrow and students will likely encounter students and staff outside of their "cohort." No, this is not the public health recommendation for elementary school students, it is the recommendation for middle and secondary school students (page 24 in the document entitled: Provincial COVID-19 Health and Safety Guidelines for K-12 Settings). That being said, in St. Michael's Safety Plan we have written: "There must be no crowding, gathering or congregating of people from different learning groups, even if non-medical masks are worn." Masks are mandated in situations where physical distancing with others outside of the cohort is not possible. Thankfully our school is small, and the teachers will be working collaboratively to ensure that only one class is in the hallway at a time. Each of the 4 cohorts (K/1, 2/3, 4/5 and 6/7) have their own wing of the school in which to move. The bathrooms are shared spaces, and physical distancing measures will be in place in these spaces. We will monitor this very closely. If students cannot maintain physical distance as directed by the classroom teacher, masks for students, who can tolerate them, in the intermediate grades will need to be mandated for hallways and washrooms.

33. Is the school allowed to mandate additional layers of protection for students and teachers in addition to the recommendations of Public Health Officer? We have been told by our Superintendent's office not to go above and beyond the Provincial Health Officer's recommendations. If we go beyond them, we don't have the ability to say that we have more expertise than the PHO. We cannot comment on what other schools may be doing. It was made VERY clear at a principals' meeting that we are not to go above the PHO recommendations. The Ministry has not given direction to mandate masks in schools and St. Michael's cannot override the Public Health Officer's guidelines. Students and staff may choose to wear additional layers of protection at any time if they choose. According to the Ministry's "Health & Safety Standards and Guidelines for K-12" non-medical masks are not recommended for elementary school students due to the increased likelihood they will touch their face and eyes, as well as require assistance to properly put on and take off their mask (requiring increased close personal contact from school staff). No student needs to wear a non-medical mask if they do not tolerate it. Non-medical masks or face coverings are required for all staff anytime they are outside of their classroom or learning group and physical distance cannot be maintained (e.g. specialist teachers or EAs working in close proximity to students across learning groups). Staff are required to wear a non-medical mask, or a face shield (in which case a non-medical mask should be worn in addition to the face shield) in high traffic areas such as in common areas such as hallways, or anytime outside of their learning group whenever physical distancing cannot be maintained (e.g., itinerant teachers/specialists interacting with multiple learning groups). Staff can also wear a mask or a face shield within their classroom or learning group if that is their personal preference. Please refer to the St. Michael's Return to School Safety Plan under Policies and Procedures Section C - Personal Protective Equipment.

34. What will the school district do when someone at a school is diagnosed with COVID-19, whether a staff person or a student? What is the plan for supporting a student's ongoing academic learning if the student is required to self-isolate and is unable to attend school in-person? As is always the case, schools will follow the direction and advice of the Provincial Health Officer if a staff person or student has been diagnosed with COVID-19. As per our usual processes,

students who are absent from school for longer periods of time due to any type of illness, including COVID-19, will be provided with learning materials to complete while they are away from school.

- 35. Will students be expected to self-isolate if the exposure is within their cohort?** Schools will follow the direction of the local public health authority if there is a direct COVID-19 exposure within their learning cohort.
- 36. a) If a child has COVID/flu-like symptoms and they remain at home, can an asymptomatic sibling still go to school?** BC Centre for Disease Control says an asymptomatic sibling can go to school, however they MUST be completely asymptomatic. “Students or staff may still attend school if a member of their household has a cold, influenza or COVID 19-like symptoms, provided the student/staff is asymptomatic.” http://www.bccdc.ca/Health-Info-Site/Documents/COVID_public_guidance/Guidance-k-12-schools.pdf
- b) Does the staff/student require a negative COVID 19 test before returning back to school?** No, they do not. Schools do not have the authority to act in these circumstances without the direction of public health officials.
- 37. How will the school inform parents of possible COVID-19 exposures, so that we can ensure that we take measures to avoid further exposure?** In the event of a possible COVID-19 exposure, schools will provide notification to staff or students' families if a staff member or student becomes ill with COVID-19 at home or at school **when directed to do so by public health.** http://www.bccdc.ca/Health-Info-Site/Documents/COVID_public_guidance/Guidance-k-12-schools.pdf (p 5). As noted above, Schools do not have the authority to act in these circumstances without the direction of public health officials.
- 38. Will the school change how it is offering instruction to students if there is an increase in cases in the general population or a certain number of confirmed cases at schools?**
Every school district in B.C. is operating within the 5 Stage [BC K-12 Education Restart Plan](#). Each district’s plans for school start-up this September were approved by the Ministry of Education and include how we will move between the various stages should that be required. Currently, we are planning for and moving into Stage 2, but if directed by the PHO to move or revert to a different stage, we will make changes to how instruction is provided, based on the requirements of that stage.
- 39. What are the measures the school will take to improve air circulation in classrooms? Will all windows be open during school hours? Are there plans for HEPA filters in each classroom?** Classroom windows will remain open during school hours. The ventilation system at St. Michael's is maintained on a scheduled basis, and was recently assessed in preparation for the start of school and was found to be in good working order. The Ministry has not mandated HEPA filters, and in some locations these devices are not recommended. The school and PEC continue to review this area of concern.
- 40. We all know that flu season is coming soon, and this is very common for everybody to have a cough/colds. What if the child has a normal cold/flu? How long do they need to stay home? No one who is sick or showing symptoms is to come to school.** Students and staff should stay home until they have been assessed by a health care provider to exclude COVID-19 or other infectious diseases **AND their symptoms have completely resolved.** Under this guidelines the child is not return to the

school even with a minor cold, as these symptoms could be passed on, thus triggering the need for other students to be tested to rule out COVID. Please refer to the St. Michael's School Safety Plan - Section 3: Policies and Procedures. Section A: Health and Sickness.

- 41. Will parents be allowed to pick up kids for lunch and take them home?** In the interest of everyone's health and safety, we are minimizing visitors to the school, including parents and guardians. This means that students should come to school with their lunch and snacks and everything that they need for the day.
- 42. Will school sports continue this fall?** Inter-school sports will not be taking place this fall, however, extracurricular activities, which may include sports and other activities, will take place within a single school site. Participants in these activities will need to comply with the health and safety protocols such as maintaining physical distancing.
- 43. Will students be participating in gym class?** Students will continue to participate in Physical and Health Education classes which are a required part of the mandated curriculum. These classes will be conducted according to the health and safety guidelines.
- 44. What is the plan to ensure proper hand hygiene?** Please see pages 5 - 6 of the School Safety Plan "Effective Cleaning and Hygiene Practices." Students from the same cohort may be in line to wash their hands in the bathroom or the kitchen, however, during the day the washroom capacity is limited to 2 students at a time to ensure there is space for social distancing.

We hope that these answers will provide the information that you are seeking.

Answers to many of the questions have changed over the last few weeks and will continue to change on a regular basis as we learn more about this virus. The school is working very hard to ensure that the health and safety of our students and staff are at the forefront of all decisions. We greatly appreciate parents being patient and flexible as these plans will undoubtedly continue to evolve and change.

