



Memorial Lutheran School

Restoring a Strong Foundation

Reopening with Safety in Mind

2020-2021





Dear Memorial Lutheran School families,

Our mission together is “building a strong foundation.” We do this as students, parents, faculty and staff; church, school and community. By the grace of God, the resilience of our faculty and staff, and the perseverance and diligence of the parents and students, MLS made great strides in building this foundation last spring.

The current environment of unease and uncertainty makes our mission precarious on the one hand but all the more necessary and significant on the other. Safety and health are paramount. Education and spiritual formation are essential to training up our children in the way they should go (Proverbs 22:6).

This school year, Memorial Lutheran School will operate on campus and in person as long as it is feasible and permissible to do so. Outlined in this document is MLS’s preliminary plan for reopening. Here one may find the policies and procedures currently in place at MLS, as well as the direction MLS intends to follow. All plans and policies adopted by MLS are informed by current local, state, and national guidelines in order to ensure that our school is able to adapt to the changing conditions regarding COVID-19 here in Houston.

As always, MLS is open to hearing the concerns of our families. Please contact us should you have any concerns at all going forward this fall. God willing, we will see you in August as we build a strong foundation together on the Gospel of Christ and the treasures of Western civilization.



In Christ,

Pastor Paul
Headmaster, Memorial Lutheran Church and School

GUIDANCE CONCERNING COVID-19

In its report on COVID-19's impact on children, the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) emphasizes the import of students' physical presence in school. The significance of in-person learning is well-documented. Continued shutdown of schools can negatively impact student health, and disruptions to instructional time can have a severe impact on a child's ability to learn. Prolonged closures can cause stress and anxiety due to the loss of peer interaction and disrupted routines.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has provided extensive guidelines to facilitate the return to school in the fall. The most recent CDC guidelines on opening schools sort its recommendations according to the degree of community spread. In the case of no community spread, the CDC recommends that schools intensify cleaning and disinfection strategies, actively monitor students and staff for absenteeism, limit large group gatherings to only essential activities, and require sick students and staff to stay home.

In the case of moderate community spread, school leaders are also asked to consider social distancing strategies for classrooms and movement in buildings and to accommodate the needs of students and families at high risk. When a school has a lab-confirmed case, the CDC recommends that portions of the school, or even the entire school, close for a short period of time.

All levels and sources of guidance are consistent in recommending individual screenings, social distancing, and enhanced sanitizing procedures as the main prevention strategies. They also emphasize the need to have a comprehensive incident response plan and a set of dual contingency plans in place: one for students and faculty who need to stay at home for long periods of time and another to be enacted in the event of a full-school shutdown.

REOPENING

Our administrative team has crafted an approach to reopening that is comprehensive, responsible, and realistic. Carefully following this path will allow us to safely reopen our school, and maintain a healthy environment as the academic year progresses.

We believe that it is essential to do whatever we can to allow children to be educated in person this year, in addition to the need for experiencing human contact outside their immediate families, both with adults and with their peers. We will continue offering students ample time outside to play and connect with other students socially, which will be supported by a more rigorous approach to regulating indoor environments.

CAMPUS IMPROVEMENTS

We have made improvements to our campus to ensure a safe environment for our school community.

- Memorial Lutheran School has established a procedure to isolate students who display symptoms of illness. Students who display symptoms during the school day will be treated in isolation from the rest of the student body while awaiting pickup. An isolation room and private restroom will be utilized and closed off from all other parts of the school.
- The school follows CDC guidelines by using EPA-approved disinfecting solutions for all cleaning. Janitorial staff will conduct daily continuous cleaning on campus between the hours of 10:30am-2:30pm, focusing on bathrooms and common area surfaces. Routine deep cleaning will continue with increased attention, as supervised by the Facilities Director.
- MLS's HVAC system is equipped with the *REME HALO®* unit, a PHI-cell technology that utilizes UVC, ionization, and hydro peroxide generation. Although *REME HALO®* has not been tested specifically on COVID-19, it has proven effective in 99% of viral cases similar to the novel coronavirus.

PREVENTION

Families are the first line of defense against illness spreading on campus. If the answer to any of the following questions is "yes," the family must inform the school and keep the student home.

1. Are you experiencing any of the following symptoms:

Fever or chills, cough, shortness of breath or difficulty breathing, fatigue, muscle or body aches, headache, new loss of taste or smell, sore throat, congestion or runny nose, nausea or vomiting, diarrhea (all symptoms should be out of the norm and unrelated to allergies or preexisting conditions).

2. In the last fourteen days, have you come in close contact with someone who is lab-confirmed to have COVID-19?

- All students, faculty, staff, and visitors will be screened upon arrival to campus using touch-free thermometers. Students with a temperature that exceeds 99 degrees will immediately return home (all symptoms should be out of the norm and unrelated to allergies or preexisting conditions). During the day, symptomatic students will immediately go to the Main Office for evaluation and will be isolated from the student body until sent home.
- Handwashing regimens will be observed by all students and staff, with a minimum of a thorough washing at the start of the day, before and after lunch, and when transitioning, for example after coming in from recess. This process will be overseen by teachers.
- MLS will comply with all state orders for face coverings indoors. When faculty and students are unable to maintain social distancing indoors, masks will be used to protect faculty, staff, and students.
 - Face coverings will be required (grades 4-9) **when** social distancing cannot be maintained (in the hallways, during transitions from the classroom to re, etc.). Students in preschool through 3rd grade may wear masks during these times as well.

- When not required, teachers reserve the right to confiscate masks that are not used properly during the school day.
- Appropriate face coverings for school will be outlined in the school manuals prior to the start of school.

Any individual may choose to wear a mask beyond the state requirements. Visits to the school are discouraged at this time. All visitors who move beyond the Front Office will be required to wear a mask. Masks will not be worn during outdoor activities, including physical education classes and recess, or during meal times. However social distancing will be enforced as much as possible during these times.

- Campus tours may be conducted virtually or in person observing social distancing and utilizing masks. In person classroom visits will be temporarily suspended, but they may be conducted virtually.
- Special events are under review of the administration and the faculty. Some events will be redesigned, and others may be suspended indefinitely. Expect to hear more information about plans for fall events (including retreats, Fall Festival, etc.) before the start of the school year.

SOCIAL DISTANCING

Our strong commitment to small class sizes already has us at an advantage. With additional precautions, students can enjoy the intimacy of their small class groups while also maintaining proper distancing from their peers while indoors.

- Classrooms will be arranged to guarantee social distancing when students are seated at their desks. All desks will face forward and alternative learning spaces in the classrooms will be limited.
- Students will remain in a single classroom as much as possible throughout the day, and the number of rooms a student will pass through during each day will be limited. MLS will work diligently to treat groups of students or classes as “cohorts” in order to safely control group interaction.
- Daily chapel will remain at 8:45 AM. Chapel will take place in the church sanctuary while practicing the accepted social distancing rules (with every other row blocked off, students will sit with adequate spacing between them).
- Drop-off and pick-up procedures will be structured to limit the size of student groups congregating at any given time.
- Lunch periods and recess will be staggered and take place in a variety of locations around campus.
- News regarding after school activities and clubs will be released prior to the first day of school.
- Music classes pose significant challenges. Pastor Paul is working diligently with Pastor Ahlman to review medical recommendations and research alternatives to keep vocal music in its rightful place of import in our curriculum.

INCIDENT RESPONSE

The CDC recommendations outline what schools should expect to do depending on the degree of community spread. We have plans to operate safely in case of no community spread, moderate community spread, and lab-confirmed cases on campus.

- Our administrative team will work to identify and respond to primary or secondary COVID-19 exposure.
- Following CDC guidelines, if a student or employee has lab-tested positive for COVID-19, we will work with state and local health authorities to determine the proper course of action, which may include a temporary school closure to allow for deep cleaning and sanitizing of campus facilities.
- If a student or employee is experiencing a fever or other symptoms, we will follow CDC guidance on the number of days to keep them home. Students will be provided appropriate work to complete from home during such an absence.

CONTINGENCY PLANNING

With reasonable accommodations and interventions, we can minimize health risks while continuing to provide excellent education on our campus. Because the future is uncertain, we have plans in place should temporary closures throughout the year become a necessity. Current plans will be assessed continuously and monitored for effectiveness; alterations will be made if any current plans prove insufficient to maintain a reasonably healthy environment.

- In-person instruction has been proven to be vastly superior to online learning, and so the school will prioritize solutions that allow for in-person instruction to take place. MLS faculty and administration are planning for ways of providing synchronous, remote learning options for those unable to attend in-person instruction.

- This year MLS will employ RenWeb's Learning Management System (LMS) to provide clear expectations and communication regarding assignments, tests, and quizzes. Homework also may be delivered online through this system. As the school year begins, tutorials and instruction will assist faculty, students and families to take the best advantage of existing technology. This will ease transitions in the case of temporary closure or illness on the part of faculty, students, or families.
- The school's calendar allows for flexibility during the school year should very short closures interrupt the academic year.
- In the event that a longer school closure is mandated, students will continue their course of study through RenWeb's LMS coupled with virtual sessions (for example, ZOOM, Microsoft Teams, etc.). Learning from last year's successes and labors, teachers will provide personalized, thoughtful instruction and plenty of resources to allow parents to facilitate their children's education at home. This course of action will only be taken if a long closure is required by government mandate, as was the case in March 2020. Return to in-person learning would occur as soon as it is safely possible to do so and permitted.