

# GEHLEN CATHOLIC SCHOOL

709 Plymouth St. NE

Le Mars, IA 51031

Excellence in Education. Leadership Through Christ.

August 6, 2020

*"The laborers in the Lord's vineyard should have one foot on the ground,  
and the other raised to proceed on their journey." --St. Ignatius of Loyola*

Dear Families,

The year 2020 has certainly presented all of us with a unique journey! At Gehlen Catholic School, we are excited and ready to continue our partnership with your family. We would like to update you on our preparations for the 2020-2021 school year in light of the COVID-19 pandemic. Our school has been working diligently to create a return-to-learn plan and re-opening guidance to ensure your family continues to receive a safe and sound Catholic education that meets your child's and family's spiritual, emotional, and intellectual needs.

## **Living Our Mission**

In this school family, we believe that we are better together because we are a family; indeed, we are many parts of one Body of Christ. We believe that we grow in our relationship with God by learning about God's creation: the world, the people in it, and ourselves. We are always learning, and we believe that we learn better together.

It is our intention to begin the school year on **August 25th** with **on-site** instruction. **If this were to change, parents would be notified immediately.** With this in mind, we are committed to providing a quality Catholic education, regardless of the mode of delivery used. The education your child receives from Gehlen Catholic School is distinct, as our Catholic beliefs, traditions, and teachings are deeply embedded in daily instruction. Gehlen Catholic School staff is prepared to continue this for the 2020-2021 school year.

Gehlen Catholic School is committed to offering the highest level of education possible by focusing directly on the faith, social, emotional, and intellectual needs of each child.

- Religion classes and prayer opportunities will be held daily.
- Teachers will provide daily communication and interaction with all students.
- Catholic beliefs, traditions, and teachings will continue to be deeply embedded in daily instruction.
- Mass will be celebrated.
- Service opportunities will be available for all students.
- Student mental health tools/tips/resources will be available.
- Core classes will be taught daily.

Gehlen Catholic is implementing numerous strategies to provide as safe and healthy learning environment as possible for all students and staff. The following plans will be in place for the 2020-2021 school year. **These plans may be subject to change as further guidance is provided and will be communicated as quickly and clearly as possible.**

## **Three Modes of Delivery**

We have prepared three models for instruction in order to be prepared for the unknown of the next school year. Each one is described below.

### On-Site Learning

This model indicates services are offered at Gehlen Catholic School. It is our goal to begin the school year on August 25th with on-site learning. To meet this goal, we have planned for additional cleaning, social distancing, training, and health/safety plans.

### Hybrid Learning

This model indicates services are offered both remotely and on-site. This model may be used to address specific student health concerns. Students using remote virtual learning will utilize Canvas (7-12), Google Classroom (4th-6th), or SeeSaw (PreK-3) for instruction. **Please contact your child's principal if you are in need of online learning due to your child's health concerns.**

### Continuous Online Learning

This model indicates services will be held remotely for all students. Virtual learning will be used in emergency situations when on-site learning is not possible. When students are using remote virtual learning they will utilize Canvas (7-12), Google Classroom (4th-6th), or SeeSaw (PreK-3) for instruction. Teachers have begun training on the use of the online learning platforms. They will be teaching students how to use the platforms during the opening days of school in preparation for potential online learning.

## **Health and Safety**

We recognize it is not possible to eliminate all COVID-19 exposure risks. However, we are working diligently to mitigate as many risks as possible with the understanding that **we rely on you, our families, to do your part to help keep our school community safe and allow us to remain on-site.** We will be implementing the following health and safety strategies to make our school as safe as possible:

### Screening

- **Children and staff must be screened at home before leaving for school.** If they exhibit any of the following symptoms, **they must stay home:**
  - Chills or a fever (temperature over 100 degrees)
  - 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
- If a temperature is discovered at school, the child or staff member will be kept away from others and be expected to leave as soon as possible.
- More information on health and safety will be provided to parents in the coming weeks.

### Face Coverings

- Students (grades PreK-12) and staff **must** wear face coverings or masks upon arrival and during the school day as safety circumstances warrant.
- Students and staff riding buses **must** wear face coverings or masks. (Gehlen Catholic and LCS requirement)
- Lessons and instructions will be provided to students on the appropriate use of face coverings, as well as the prevention of stigmas associated with use or non-use of face coverings.

### Cleaning and Disinfecting

- Frequent cleaning and disinfecting procedures will be implemented. Bathrooms and high traffic areas will be cleaned/sanitized multiple times during the day.

### Hand Washing and Personal Hygiene

- Hand washing will be done several times a day, including at arrival, dismissal, before and after lunch and recess, etc. Instruction in proper handwashing will be provided to students.
- Hand sanitizer and tissues will be available in multiple places in the classrooms and school.

### Limiting Exposure

- **Entrance to the school will be limited to staff and students only.** Parents will be admitted in the event of an emergency.
- Staff continues to plan how to reconfigure and utilize building space to provide for as much social distancing as possible.

- Cohorts will be used wherever possible to keep small groups of students together and limit exposure to other groups of students.
- The school will develop protocols for isolation and discharge of students who become sick during the school day. Separate spaces will be created for ill students to wait for pickup where possible.

#### Exposure

- All positive cases of COVID-19 will be reported to Plymouth County Public Health. We will follow their guidance for notification, contact tracing, cleaning, and closure.

#### Training

- All school staff will complete the state-provided training which highlights best health and safety practices for schools.

### **What You Can Do**

We are excited to have your children back and hope they are as well! **Please understand that we are making the best decisions we can for all involved.** We know that not everyone will be happy or agree with all of our decisions. Parental attitudes will impact that of students and others. **Your support and positive disposition toward the school's policies and plans are needed and appreciated.** Below are a few other things you can do to help our school community:

- Talk to your child about how school will look differently, and discuss health and safety measures when they are released.
- Continue to read school communications as more information becomes available.
- Make sure your contact information and student health information is up to date.
- **Please keep your child at home if they do not feel well.** It is important to keep your child home if they have a temperature above 100. **Please do not give fever-reducing medication and send your child to school as this could cause the spread of infection.**
- Follow CDC and Plymouth County Health guidelines as a family when not at school to reduce potential exposures.
- **Immediately report any exposure or positive cases to school nurse Mandy Weiland at 712-546-4181 ext. 234.**
- Please contact your child's principal to request to be part of our hybrid model if your child cannot attend on-site learning due to health concerns.
- **Be prepared with a backup plan for your child if s/he, the class, or entire school would be required to move to online learning.**
- Prepare to **send a filled water bottle to school with your child** as the usual water fountain use will not be available due to potential for spread of the virus.
- **Please reach out with any questions or concerns. Our school staff is here to help!**

Our school team continues to receive information almost daily from the Iowa Department of Education, Iowa Department of Public Health, CDC, Diocese of Sioux City Catholic Schools Office, and Plymouth County Health Department. **Please keep in mind that plans and guidance may change as more information is received.** Our local return-to-learn committee will continue to review this information in order to welcome your child back to Gehlen Catholic School as safely as possible. Thank you for entrusting us with your most precious gift!

Sincerely,

*Lorie A. Nussbaum*

Lorie A. Nussbaum  
PreK-6 Principal

*Jeff Alesch*

Jeff Alesch  
7-12 Principal