

Memo to: Parents and Guardians
Memo from: Sr. Margaret Mancuso
July 20, 2020
Re: School Planning for Reopening



Our unprecedented journey continues with the release of Reopening Guidelines from the NYS Dept. of Health and the NYS Dept. of Education this past week. We were also notified that the Guidelines for NYS Religious and Independent Schools will be released momentarily. Our Core Committee has been reviewing these documents carefully.

There has been much in the news about the release of these documents. Some public school districts, especially the large ones, are sharing their broad preliminary plans already. Let me give you our weekly update on plans for Nazareth. There are many questions about how the new school year will take shape, and as we continue to plan for a variety of scenarios, please keep in mind that each update provided is based on the most current NYS guidance and information available, but is subject to change as new information is received.

Be assured that every decision made will have the health and safety of our students, staff, and families as the top priority. With faith and trust, we will continue to work together to ensure a safe, faith-filled, and quality academic experience during the 20-21 school year for our children.

Ongoing Planning Committees

Our Core Committee and subcommittees met again last week and will continue to meet as often as needed to ensure that the best plans possible are developed and implemented for the good of all. Every school/district must submit its plans to NYS by July 31 for approval. Governor Cuomo will use the submitted plans and health metrics to make a final determination on the status of the reopening of schools, hopefully by August 7.

Reopening Plans and the Learning Environment

As required by the state, each school plan will include a learning plan that addresses a variety of scenarios, including if schools are able to reopen for in-person instruction, continue fully online, or a combination of both.

At this time, after assessing our building capacity, enrollment, and staffing resources, Nazareth will strive to provide full-day, in-person instruction for students in September. This requires the development and implementation of plans that will meet the health and safety guidelines currently available from the state. We have been working very hard on these already. The plans will include procedures for the daily monitoring of health, building awareness of good hygiene habits and safe practices, training of staff and students in new protocols, and the recommended guidelines on social distancing and face coverings per the NYS Department of Health.

In our favor is the size of our school community and our large classrooms, cafeteria, and gym. We will be moving some rooms, starting with the Nurse's office. One move will lead to other changes, especially in the ECP/Arts wing, to allow for greater social distancing. We are looking at varied scheduling so classes are not passing each other in the halls all day long. Half-size classes at a time for Specials is on the table for discussion as we lay out plans as well.

In addition to planning for in-school instruction, we are planning for full distance learning as from mid-March through June. We will also consider if we are able to offer distance learning for students who are unable to attend school for in-person instruction. Some larger schools and districts are studying a hybrid model where students attend some days of the week and are learning at home the other days to cut down on the number of students in the building on any given day. At the elementary level, we are concerned about this model for a number of reasons, but we have to consider it.

As we plan the curriculum and assessment components, greater instruction in the use of technology in various subjects and programs will be included to ensure that all students are comfortable learning with technology tools and resources both in school and at home. This will allow a smooth transition to distance learning in the event of a sudden closure during the school year.

Survey for Families

Please note: You will be receiving a short survey in the next day or two that will assist us with this planning. We ask that you complete it as soon as possible.

Many Thanks!

As I wrote last week, we are so grateful for your continued support of Nazareth and the trust you place in us to educate your children. We are humbled and privileged. I can assure you that all of our faculty and staff will continue to work hard to provide your children with the quality, faith-filled, and amazing learning experiences that Nazareth has always offered. The school will look a bit different, and there will be some new procedures, but it will still be Nazareth! We miss everyone and hope we can all be together in September. Keep us in your prayers as we continue to plan for the good of the children.

Further details on the plans to reopen will be made available as they unfold.

*Thank you and God's blessings on your summer days!
Please stay safe and well!*

