

# ST. ALPHONSUS CATHOLIC SCHOOL

July 25, 2020

Dear Members of the St. Alphonsus Catholic School Community,

I am happy to share with you that St. Alphonsus Catholic School remains ready to open the 2020-21 School Year and welcome your children on August 6. As detailed in the following pages, we have prepared well for multiple eventualities given the current COVID-19 situation. We are confident about the plans and precautions underway and ask for your cooperation, patience, and, most of all, prayers as we embark on a new school year. We have every expectation that, while the beginning of this year will be unique, this year will be the best ever in the 137 year history of St. Alphonsus Catholic School.

The turbulence and fear we experience in the environment of COVID-19 reminds me of the Gospel account of Jesus calming the waters when He and His disciples were at sea and threatened by a raging storm. Rapt with fear of drowning, the disciples woke Jesus, who instructed them to have faith and then rebuked the waves into a calm sea. The message of this account is one of faith and the sovereignty of God in all trials we encounter. I pray that we, as a school community, will place our trust in what God has provided to us. He has given us the ability to use reason and prudence to prepare for contingencies and what the following days may bring to us. We implore His continued blessings and protections.

Please know that our administration and faculty are committed to providing your children with an unparalleled education and deepening their relationship with Christ. We will answer your questions and meet your concerns at all possible points. Please direct questions regarding our protocols and procedures to me at [dallen@stal.org](mailto:dallen@stal.org). The following pages offer information on how we have prepared for this school year. We will continue to update our website with information ([www.stal.org](http://www.stal.org)).



Blessings and Peace,

*Deacon David W. Allen*  
Principal

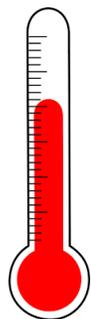
# Wholistic Well-Being & Safety

Since the Diocese of Biloxi announced that we would return to campus this fall, our paramount focus has been to reopen in an environment of both safety and care for our students, our faculty and staff, and our families. Over the summer we have been in constant communication with our diocesan leadership, fellow school principals, teachers, and families. The safety protocols and guidelines issued by our Biloxi Diocese Office of Catholic Schools have been carefully developed in consultation with health and education professionals and state and federal agencies. These protocols have been crafted and will be implemented under our best effort to do what is reasonable and prudent under prevailing circumstances. We know these circumstances will change over the coming weeks and months. We will endeavor to anticipate changes and will be nimble in our approach. We trust you will do the same as partners in the wellbeing of our children. The following pages are intended to summarize the protocols and procedures currently in place. The policies, procedures, and protocols issued by the Diocese of Biloxi Office of Catholic Schools, specifically in the document [Protocols for Returning to School](#), and those contained in our Handbook control and supersede any information that may be contradictory or less specific below. Across the school, we will operationalize the following:



## Temperature Screening & Sanitation

Touch-free temperature scan of each child upon entry to school. A temperature reading of 100.4 degrees or higher will be deemed a fever. Parents will be notified.



- Grade bands arrive and dismiss in staggered schedules. More details will be communicated.
- Daily symptom screening for anyone entering campus including staff and essential visitors.
- In-home monitoring by parents for any symptoms is critical.
- Each classroom, hallway, bathroom and other areas of campus have been deep cleaned and sanitized. Enhanced cleaning will be performed daily and in between classes as necessary.
- Hand sanitizer stations have been installed in each classroom. The cafeteria has always had a hand sanitizer station. Handwashing with soap and water is prioritized.
- A custodian is retained to be on staff during school hours to maintain sanitation and disinfectant protocols. Playground equipment will be disinfected between uses. Water fountains are disabled.



## Facial Coverings

- Face coverings will be worn by all teachers, staff and essential visitors while inside a campus building unless working independently in an office space separate from others. Exceptions are provided in the [Protocols for Returning to School](#) published by the Diocese of Biloxi Office of Catholic Schools.
- All students in grades 1st - 6th will wear a mask or cloth face covering while inside the school, including classrooms, and when social distancing is not possible. Masks are optional for PK2 to Kindergarten. Mask usage will be supported with grace, love, and encouragement. The PTO is making St. Alphonsus-branded face masks available for purchase.

## Physically Distanced. Socially Connected.

- Our front office has been remodeled to provide greater protection for students, staff, and essential visitors.
- Only students in PreK-2 will be escorted into classrooms by parents.
- All students, teachers, staff, and essential visitors will maintain as close to 6 feet distancing to the greatest extent possible when on school campus.
- Student seating will be placed at least 6 ft apart to the greatest extent possible.

## Partnership with Our Families

To carry out our plan, we must emphasize the need for your partnership at home in safety. Each member of our school community must take seriously their responsibility for the health and safety of the whole. At school, we will be implementing measures to mitigate risks and to protect your children from getting sick while they are at school. We ask for your rigorous support at home, as well.



## Academic: Teaching & Learning

St. Alphonsus is a Christian community providing a broad, rigorous curriculum that challenges students academically and spiritually while encouraging self-discipline and service to God and nation. These standards of rigor and innovation are constant and will remain intact regardless of circumstance.

### **Infection Prevention Protocols – A Tiered Approach**

The Diocese of Biloxi has developed guidelines for creating the Infection Prevention Protocols (IPP) for each school. Once the guidelines were approved, elementary principals from the diocesan schools met to discuss the IPP for our campuses. Through a discussion of scenarios in a typical school day and a review of several plans, the group decided to take a leveled approach to our IPP. We believe that a multi-tiered plan, with adequate health measures, covers most scenarios and provides the best protection for our students. Each tier focuses on prevention as an essential way to avoid infections. The tiered approach previously was emailed and may be accessed at our website ([www.stal.org/covid-19/](http://www.stal.org/covid-19/)). In evaluating the current risk level of our community, we have decided to start the year on Level 2.

Technology will be utilized as needed this year in various platforms depending upon the grade level, as it was during the virtual learning of this spring. At any point in the year, we can video lessons for student delivery and have them available as needed. In the event we reach Level 4 or 5 of our IPP, our students and teachers will be ready for a seamless transition; the curriculum will continue to be taught through video lessons and other resources.

At any point while these health circumstances exist, a family may opt to receive virtual, online instruction from our faculty instead of physical class instruction. If that choice is made, the student must maintain the virtual instruction mode for the remainder of the nine week period. All work and grading parameters will be utilized in virtual instruction as they are in the traditional, classroom setting.



# What If ? - Symptoms or Positive Diagnosis

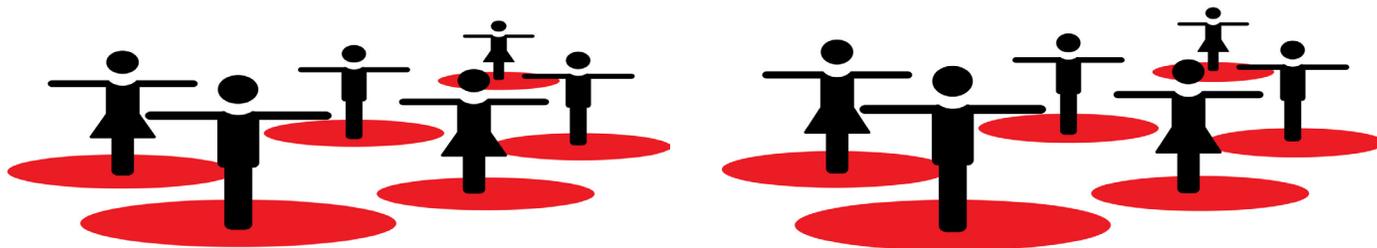
In the event of a diagnosis or exposure, we ask you to contact the school office immediately. If a member of our school community contracts COVID-19, the school will follow the guidelines detailed in the [Protocols for Returning to School](#) published by the Diocese of Biloxi Office of Catholic Schools. These guidelines can be summarized as follows:

## Quarantine period of 14 days

- Students who are quarantined will receive virtual, online instruction as their circumstances allow.
- St. Alphonsus maintains a steady cadre of qualified professionals to continue instruction in the event a faculty member is quarantined.

## Contact Tracing and Notification

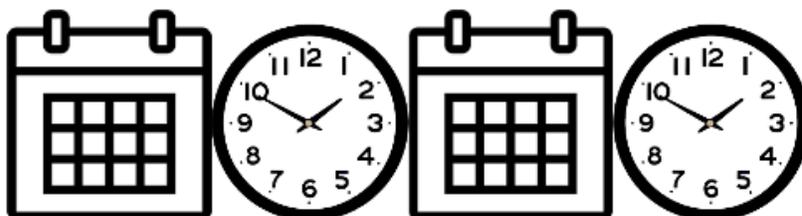
- The local health department and Diocese of Biloxi Office of Catholic Schools will be notified for contact tracing support.
- Steps will be taken to determine recent, close “primary contacts” with the infected individual. According to the CDC, the definition of close contact is limited but is loosely defined as being within approximately 6 feet of a COVID-19 case for a prolonged period of time (15 minutes or more) or having direct contact with infectious secretions of a COVID-19 case such as being coughed on.



# Start Dates, Arrival & Dismissal

We look forward to Final Registration for all families on July 29, from 8:00a.m. to 4:00p.m. in the school library. Parents can pay final registration and tuition fees, complete forms, and sign up for various PTO activities. We will email these forms to you in advance and ask that you complete them before arriving to expedite the process. Social distancing will be in effect, and we ask that you wear a mask during your time at the school.

Meet the Teacher Night will be abbreviated but will be held on August 3. The 2020-21 School Year begins with the first day of class on August 6. We will provide more details about the procedures for the first day and the staggered schedule for Meet the Teacher via separate communication.



# Faith: An Unceasing Commitment

At the center of St. Alphonsus Catholic School are the teachings of Christ. Promoting Christian values is of primary importance as the basis of moral discernment and the foundation of a meaningful life. We remain committed to these values and helping families instill them into the lives of our children.

## Mass

Children will continue to attend Mass on a weekly basis. We plan to stagger classes on separate days to allow for social distancing between classes at Mass.

## Instruction in All Classes

In addition to our Religion curriculum, teachers present all course subjects with appropriately integrated religious and theological elements.

## Prayer

Our St. Alphonsus school community always has been devoted to prayer. We begin and end our day in prayer as a collective school community, and each class provides individual and group prayer throughout the day. We will continue in prayer and pray with great vigor for our safety and the eradication of COVID-19.

## Family Prayer

We implore each family within our school community to be devoted to daily prayer with your children. We pray for God's unending blessings and protection for your family and dear children.



## Dining & Nutrition Services



We appreciate that families have different meal preferences, so we utilize a healthy dining menu or lunch box from home. Our monthly menu for August is in place. We know you will agree that our Director of Child Nutrition, Ms. Cecilia Snyder, has planned another amazing lineup of healthy and delicious lunch offerings for our children. We are fortunate to have a director of child nutrition that is a registered dietician with a master's in nutrition and food services.

Lunch schedules and class placement have been arranged to provide for appropriate distance between class groups. Our dining services staff will ensure increased sanitation, and social distance protocols are in place for seating of classes. Please help us teach your children to keep to their own lunches and snacks, particularly during this time of increased sanitation protocols.