

Saint Agnes Academy

SINCE 1957, A CATHOLIC PARISH SCHOOL FOR PRE-SCHOOL TO GRADE 8
30 Carson Ave, Dalton MA 01226

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Good afternoon Saint Agnes Academy families,

We all wish we had a crystal ball which would tell us all the right answers to all the questions regarding the fall opening. And while we all want to be back in class, returning to the way we know education, we also know that there will not be a one-size-fits-all solution for every grade level. What will be universal, however, is the astonishing amount of information we need to collect, the extraordinary searching and the honest discussion of our experience we as school staff, faculty, board, PTO, and families will do to make sure we make the right decisions for our students, staff and community.

As we face challenges in moving our school to a more digital technology for remote learning while applying the new safety measures, we are trying to balance the need to make our students' educations more personal, relevant, and deeply engaging in the classroom.

With that in mind as a focus and priority, I would like to share a few updates with you regarding the opening in September.

- We met with the superintendent and his assistants on Wednesday, July 1
- Saint Agnes Academy Reopen committee had their first meeting on Tuesday, July 7
- Saint Agnes Academy faculty had a meeting on Monday, July 13.

Meeting with the superintendent

We walked through our building to measure our rooms and make sure that we can fully implement the maximum safe distances recommended by the CDC (6 feet apart). I am happy to announce that each and every classroom in our school will implement the maximum safe distance seating to allow for safe in-class instruction.

Re-Open committee

We had a great first meeting with over 30 members including faculty, staff, PTO, board members, current families, and new families who shared with us questions, concerns, and visions.

This will be an ongoing effort as we are continue to discuss on a rolling basis with a meeting every other week to address and tackle the new challenges. I would like to keep everyone in the loop regarding the major points of discussion with more info to follow after our second meeting scheduled for July 21:

- Health and safety procedures and supplies
- Facilities and operation
- Transportation

- Remote learning resources

Faculty meeting

Our faculty will meet regularly to make sure:

- Each classroom is prepared and ready for a safe opening.
- We are ready if we have to go remote at any point, with a complete academic backup plan

Our teachers are meeting in small groups to ensure that they have a detailed plan for safe opening and remote teaching for each grade level.

Remote Learning

We are developing a remote teaching plan taking into consideration parent feedback and teachers experience. We learned from our experience in the last few months of remote teaching and we will evaluate what worked and what did not to modify our plan for remote teaching.

We are happy to announce that our FACTS system will allow for one point of access to every thing a family need from finance to grades to remote learning.

We adopted LMS, a platform in FACTS system that allows each family to have access to their child classroom assignments, announcement, and calendar from one point of access.

Each child will have a school account with a user name and password to login and access all courses from any device.

Our teachers will receive proper training on how to use LMS during the summer. Our students will be trained to use the platform. Families will receive a detailed letter and list of resources to get familiar with the system.

I assure you that we searched and looked at many platforms for remote learning during the last few months. This by far the most efficient, user friendly, convenient, and easy to use platform we could find in the market. The big plus is the *fact* that It is built in FACTS, which means families will not have to access another platform or struggle with multiple resources or multiple points of access.

What we know so far

- Students will learn full time, in class, in-person instruction.
- We have the capacity in each classroom to have the students 6 feet apart.
- Students have experienced extreme disruption and we understand that the first period will be used to evaluate .
- Students must be trained in the appropriate use of PPE, how to move about the school building, as well as a good hygiene practices.
- Students will need training on how to follow the new safety measurements. The teachers will do in-class training and we will continue to remind them of these roles by direct instructions and visual signs throughout the school.

- We will have clearly visible markings to indicate the walking direction throughout the campus to maintain the social distancing requirements when necessary. This will also be of help when training students to move throughout the campus during school days.
- Digital literacy for teachers and students is no longer optional and it will be part of everyday education.
- According to DESE, masks are required to be worn by employees, all visitors, and all students in grades 2-12. Face shields are also an option. In our school, masks or face shields will be required for employees, students (grades 2-12), parents, and visitors when entering, exiting, and moving throughout the school building. Parents are required to provide a mask for their children.
- Masks are not required but recommended to Pre-K, K, and first grade. Our teachers will communicate their plan for use of masks if and when necessary.
- According to DESE, “mask breaks” should occur throughout the day. In our school, when students are in class, properly distanced, and while seated, they may remove their masks during instruction.
- Employees, students, parents, and visitors should follow the state Dept. of Public Health (DPH) recommendations for social distancing when in common areas on school grounds.
- We will monitor and limit the number of visitors entering the building.
- Students must follow at least a 3-foot standard while entering and exiting the facility, passing in the hallways, moving around the classrooms, and during the liturgy.
- Mask breaks are allowed when they are outdoors, or socially distanced indoors. (This includes instruction time.)
- The Catholic Schools of the Diocese of Springfield will follow Department of Elementary and Secondary Education’s recommendations for screening. They are as follows:
 - **Screening procedures are not required at the point of entry to the school.** However, school staff (as well as bus drivers) should observe students throughout the day and refer students who may be symptomatic to the school healthcare point of contact.
 - **Temperature checks are not recommended** as screening for all students due to the high likelihood of potential false-positive and false-negative results.
- If a student demonstrates symptoms of COVID-19, the school is required to follow the DPH guidelines for student isolation and return to home. The school will also follow DPH guidance for student re-entry into the classroom and any other protocols given by the local health department.
- Following good hygiene practices limits exposure to all viruses. Good hygiene practices include:
 - Washing hands often with soap and water for at least 30 seconds.
 - Using hand sanitizer with at least 70% alcohol if soap and water are not available
 - Avoiding touching the eyes, nose, and mouth
 - Covering the mouth and nose or use the inside of your elbow when you cough or sneeze
 - Teaching students how to practice good hygiene practices

Decisions regarding how to reopen schools will not be simple to clarify within a specific amount of time. But, we will always keep you part of the conversation and part of the decision.

You will receive a survey shortly. Depending on our families feedback, need and input, we will be making modifications regarding morning care, after care, remote teaching and other issues.

Please reach out to us with any questions or concerns.

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