

July 20, 2020

Dear Preschool Families,

I hope this finds everyone healthy and well. We have been busy making plans for the fall that will allow us to welcome all preschoolers back in person. Because preschool falls under the jurisdiction of the Department of Children, Youth & Families (rather than K-12 which is regulated by the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction), the guidelines for re-opening in the fall are slightly different. DCYF is recommending that preschools limit class sizes to ten and separate groups into different locations, when possible. Even though this is not a mandate, we feel it's safest for the children and staff to adhere to these recommendations. Therefore, we have made plans to split the regular two preschool classes (Tigers and Cubs) into four small groups with no more than ten per group. Each small group will be located in a separate classroom space with at least one teacher. This ratio adheres to DCYF requirements.

In order to do this, it will be necessary to use additional facility space beyond our normal preschool classrooms. As such, we have arranged to use two classrooms located across the street in the Siena Center. This is a parish-owned building located directly across the street from the main preschool portable on 86<sup>th</sup> Avenue. For the last several years, the Siena Center has been occupied by Listen and Talk, a school for deaf children. Listen and Talk is moving to another location at the end of July, and the parish is making the space available to us. The classroom spaces at Siena Center are big enough to safely and comfortably hold groups up to ten, and there is a large outdoor play area in the back. The rooms will be set up similar to the ones in the main building. In addition, the facility offers separate drop off and pick up locations which will adhere to social distancing requirements.

Preschoolers who are enrolled in the half day program will be located in one of the two Siena Center classrooms. Those who are enrolled in the full day program will be located in one of the two classrooms in the main preschool building. This ensures that all children can remain with the same group throughout the day, limiting their exposure to greater numbers of children. Because the academic lessons are always taught in the mornings, both lead teachers from the Cubs and Tigers classes (Lee Hults in Cubs and Rose O'Neill in Tigers) will still be able to deliver the daily literacy and math lessons to each group (i.e. Mrs. O'Neill will spend the first half of the morning with one Tigers group and the other half of the morning with the second group – the same goes for Mrs. Hults). Preschoolers will spend the other part of the morning with the assistant teacher (Colleen Douglas in Cubs or Maureen Gockowski in Tigers) doing the other activities that are included in the normal preschool curriculum (i.e. specialist classes, story time, recess, centers, snack, etc.). We are also hiring an additional part-time teacher to help as well.

The preschool will also be implementing several procedural changes that adhere to the health and safety guidelines outlined by the Washington State Health Department. They include:

- Daily health and temperature checks upon arrival. All staff and preschool children will need to be screened before entering the building. Parents will need to wait until the

process is complete before leaving their child at school. In August, we will communicate the specifics to the daily drop off and pick up plan.

- All staff members will be required to wear face masks. Per the state, it is optional for preschoolers.
- Preschoolers will need to have and use their own set of materials and will practice frequent hand washing throughout the day. The preschool supply list is posted on the school website. <https://www.stcatherineschool.net/preschool>
- The staff will disinfect the classroom and high touch surfaces multiple times per day.
- At this time, it is unlikely we will be able to offer a hot lunch option for preschool. Parents should plan to send snacks and lunch each day.
- Some parents have asked what the protocol will be if a child or family member is diagnosed with COVID. Will the preschool close? Will the student or the whole class be required to stay home? It really will depend on the circumstances. The direction we have received so far from both the Office for Catholic Schools and the state health department is that this will be determined on a case by case basis. The school will be required to notify the health department, who will make the call on next steps depending on the circumstances and range of exposure. These are all key points that will be addressed in our health and safety plan which will be shared later in the summer. **It will be critical that parents notify the school right away if anyone in their family or anyone they have come into contact with is diagnosed with COVID.**
- More than ever, it will be absolutely critical that children who are sick (in any way, including colds) or have a fever, **are not sent to school**. We will be outlining more specifics in our health and safety plan, but it's important to mention this now. Families should have a plan in place before school starts in case anyone may be required to stay home for any length of time.

While there are many changes to navigate ahead, we are excited to be able to re-open our preschool on a full daily schedule. The plan described above allows us to provide the complete preschool experience while also adhering to prudent health and safety guidelines. The preschool team will be offering Zoom orientation sessions for parents in mid-August to discuss all of the details and to answer any questions you might have. Those dates and times will be announced soon. In the meantime, please feel free to email me if I can help in any way.

Peace & blessings to you all,

Pam Schwartz  
Principal  
St. Catherine School