



ST MARK'S
EPISCOPAL SCHOOL

MOVING FORWARD TO THE FALL OF 2020

A Message from Headmaster, Garhett Wagers

Dear St. Mark's Families,



Through the following guide, we offer you a view into the planning and preparation that is taking place for the fall of 2020. Throughout the summer we have worked on a variety of scenarios, consulting many resources. You will note on page 4 of this document a list of global, national, regional, and local organizations that have contributed to this work. Members of our Leadership Team and faculty are engaged in conversations with their colleagues at peer schools and organizations, and personally, I maintain ongoing conversations with Heads of ISAS schools in Houston and throughout Texas, as we each strive to learn from one another and further broaden our perspectives.

This resource, *Moving Forward to the Fall of 2020*, is a working draft; it is not a guarantee, nor is it final. Even the most renowned doctors in the world today are unable to predict with certainty what August will look like, and the recent spike in positive cases in Houston serves as evidence that each day brings new challenges to any type of planning.

What this document does provide is a view into the work that has been done to prepare for a variety of possible scenarios. We realize that most of the temporary changes needed to enhance everyone's safety will result in compromises of the ideal environment, an environment that best aligns with our mission, values, and beliefs about teaching and learning. With that, I reiterate that these changes and protocols are temporary. We are seeking solutions that allow as many St. Mark's children as possible to return to campus for live, in-classroom school experiences.

A Message from Headmaster, Garhett Wagers



The faculty and staff of St. Mark's understands and appreciates the challenges ahead. Each of us will continue working to stay informed and refine this plan with a mind toward the health and safety of our community members as well as the social, emotional, and cognitive needs of our children.

St. Mark's is truly a community wherein the school celebrates each child and stewards his or her intellectual curiosity, faith, and passion for discovery. We know to do this well we need our students here, with us. This "new normal" as some will refer to it is not ideal; however, as your child's school, we are committed to adapting so we can provide the best possible St. Mark's experience. So many of the personal, human interactions of our day feel lost. For me, the handshakes, fist bumps, high fives, and hugs are missed dearly, but I know our community is strong and resilient, and together we will work to sustain the connections that foster trust, strengthen partnerships, and enhance learning. Together we will become a stronger school community for you and with you.

We ask you to continue reading our weekly Friday messages, and checking stmes.org/coronavirus regularly throughout the summer for important updates to this evolving situation. As always, we appreciate your support and engagement.

Garhett Wagers
Headmaster



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Centers for
Disease Control
and Prevention

World Health
Organization

Texas Health and
Human Services

Independent
Schools
Association of the
Southwest

American
Academy of
Pediatrics

Texas Education
Agency

Leadership and Expertise

At St. Mark's, members of our school Leadership Team are working closely with our School Nurse to consider and create actionable plans for re-opening our campus and serving our community for the 2020-2021 school year.

Together, we drafted this guide drawing from:

- Decades of experience as educators
- A deep understanding of our St. Mark's community
- Intentional conversations with other schools in our area
- Awareness around the plans of independent schools across the country
- Research about current public health and governmental guidelines





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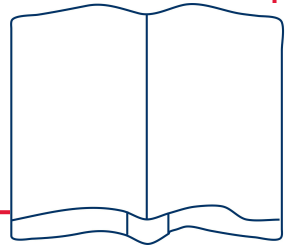
Our Mission:

The community of St. Mark's Episcopal School celebrates the uniqueness of each child. We are stewards of our students' intellectual curiosity, faith, and passion for discovery. We cultivate joy, playfulness, and growth in a child-centered environment.

Distance Learning: The Academic Experience

With our mission guiding us, we have established sound pedagogical practices that are able to be passed from experience to experience, regardless of whether we are together in school, or at home learning virtually.

We are called to be ambitious in our teaching and learning, which requires that we teach in response to what students do as they engage in problem solving performances. All the while we hold students accountable to learning goals that include procedural fluency, strategic competence, adaptive reasoning, and productive dispositions. In any situation, teaching ambitiously is a tall order. Our expectations are that your experiences will mirror this philosophy, and we have established our scenarios with this in mind.





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We are committed to providing a rich and ambitious learning experience for all of our students, whether they are on campus or learning virtually.

Continuous Learning

Recognizing the importance and value of continued learning regardless of our circumstances, we are committed to providing a rich and ambitious learning experience for all of our students. **In person learning continues to be the preferred approach, and our priority is to provide that for our students as much as possible**, knowing that the school year will include a mixture of on campus learning with virtual learning.

In preparation for the fall, reflection of our spring virtual environment, in combination with many fruitful conversations with parents, has led to student-centered improvements. Elements such as **increased synchronous lessons, collaborative experiences with peers, and expanding the use of our technology** will be important pieces of deep student learning.





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Overview of Various Scenarios

We will move the first day of school for students to Monday, August 24, 2020. It is our sincere hope to move to an on-campus learning environment as quickly as possible, and we are targeting for September 8 as a goal, however, this decision will be based on the condition of the virus in Houston. We are preparing for the following:

CAMPUS OPEN

HYBRID MODEL

CAMPUS CLOSED



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Overview of Various Scenarios

CAMPUS OPEN

Ideally, **we will have each student on campus at some point during the 2020-2021 school year.** However, in this scenario school still will look somewhat different than what we are accustomed to. For example, students will attend St. Mark's daily as planned, but will be divided into more sections of students to accommodate the social distancing guidelines.

HYBRID MODEL

There are many situations that could necessitate a hybrid model. For example, students may choose to stay home voluntarily while their peers are in class on campus, as a school we may need to move into an alternating attendance approach to support distancing limitations, or there is the possibility of intermittent distance learning due to illness or exposure.

CAMPUS CLOSED

If a campus closure is necessary to contain the spread of COVID-19, **we will enact our Distance Learning protocols for everyone.** We have learned a great deal from our spring experiences, and we have listened to the valuable feedback from our community to make effective change from our spring trials.



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Campus Open: Primary School Impact

Preschool 2s through Kindergarten

CAMPUS OPEN

Ideally, **we will have each student on campus at some point during the 2020-2021 school year..** However, in this scenario school still will look somewhat different than what we are accustomed to. For example, students will attend St. Mark's daily as planned, but will be divided into more sections of students to accommodate the social distancing guidelines.

In Primary School, we will build upon our commitment to:

- Smaller class sizes
- Child-centered, active learning within the classroom
- Age-appropriate skill development and personalized differentiation to support each unique child
- Students will participate in the appropriate weekly enrichment classes of Art, Music, Spanish, Religion, and Gross Motor.

Finally, we will ensure the learning environment is safe for the young learners with **additional daily cleaning and sanitizing**, intentional focus on hand washing, and smaller groups in centers.



Campus Open: Lower School Impact

1st through 4th Grade

CAMPUS OPEN

Ideally, **we will have each student on campus at some point during the 2020-2021 school year..** However, in this scenario school still will look somewhat different than what we are accustomed to. For example, students will attend St. Mark's daily as planned, but will be divided into more sections of students to accommodate the social distancing guidelines.

CLASS ROTATION

Normally: 2 classes per grade traveling between enrichment classes like art, music, religion, science, and Spanish. 3rd and 4th Grade students also rotate for Language Arts and math.

Fall: Smaller groups that remain in the homeroom classroom while academic and enrichment teachers rotate to them to limit potential exposure of COVID-19.

SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL

Normally: Daily outdoor recess and regular social-emotional lessons

Fall: Daily outdoor recess and daily social-emotional lessons

SCHEDULE

Normally: A rotation of enrichment classes that students travel to

Fall: A rotation of enrichment classes that take place in the homeroom classrooms



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Campus Open: Middle School Impact

5th through 8th Grade

CAMPUS OPEN

Ideally, **we will have each student on campus at some point during the 2020-2021 school year..** However, in this scenario school still will look somewhat different than what we are accustomed to. For example, students will attend St. Mark's daily as planned, but will be divided into more sections of students to accommodate the social distancing guidelines.

CLASS ROTATION

Normally: 3 sections per grade traveling between core classes, plus 3 different sections for their Art, Music, and Religion classes

Fall: Smaller, consistent cohorts that will not travel from class-to-class. The same groupings will remain throughout the school day to limit potential COVID-19 exposure.

ADVISORY

Normally: Gender specific homerooms

Fall: Mixed gender in the same groups as other classes

SCHEDULE

Normally: Seven classes per day plus advisory and daily outdoor recess

Fall: Six classes per day plus advisory and daily outdoor recess

MORE

Elective Classes: Postponed

No use of lockers; backpacks used instead



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Hybrid Model: What is “Hybrid?”

HYBRID MODEL

There are many situations that could necessitate a hybrid model. For example, students may choose to stay home voluntarily while their peers are in class on campus, as a school we may need to move into an alternating attendance approach to support distancing limitations, or there is the possibility of intermittent distance learning due to illness or exposure.

Students choose to stay home voluntarily:

If a student or someone in the student's household has a compromised health condition, parents may choose for their child to engage in distance learning.

Students stay home temporarily due to illness or exposure:

If a student has been exposed to someone with a confirmed case of COVID-19 or is exhibiting symptoms but is physically and emotionally able, he or she may engage in distance learning temporarily.

Alternating Attendance Approach

If we need to support distance learning and space limitations, some students may attend school in an alternating attendance approach. In this case, the school will strongly consider the impact of distance learning based on the age and developmental stage of the students when considering the schedule, prioritizing as full a schedule as possible with our youngest lions. Any version of alternating attendance will consider the family's needs as well, likely using our Red Team/Blue Team structure to keep siblings together.



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EPISCOPAL SCHOOL

Campus Closed: Primary School Impact

Preschool 2s through Kindergarten

CAMPUS CLOSED

If a campus closure is necessary to contain the spread of COVID-19, **we will enact our Distance Learning protocols for everyone.** We have learned a great deal from our spring experiences, and we have listened to the valuable feedback from our community to make effective change from our spring trials.

In the Primary School, students will have the opportunity to participate in weekly whole class meetings, small group activity meetings, and individual follow up meetings with their teachers.

Activities with instructions will be provided each week along with **daily videos from the child's teacher.** The activities will be interactive and age appropriate but may need some supervision.

The enrichment teachers will continue to follow a similar schedule as on campus learning.



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Campus Closed: Lower School Impact

1st through 4th Grade

CAMPUS CLOSED

If a campus closure is necessary to contain the spread of COVID-19, **we will enact our Distance Learning protocols for everyone.** We have learned a great deal from our spring experiences, and we have listened to the valuable feedback from our community to make effective change from our spring trials.

In the Lower School, students will experience **daily synchronous lessons** within a schedule that considers developmentally appropriate amounts of screen time, collaborative experiences with peers, and **personalized instruction and guidance** from teachers.

Enrichment classes will be provided as asynchronous lessons embedded in the schedule.



ST. MARK'S
EPISCOPAL SCHOOL

Campus Closed: Middle School Impact

5th through 8th Grade

CAMPUS CLOSED

If a campus closure is necessary to contain the spread of COVID-19, **we will enact our Distance Learning protocols for everyone.** We have learned a great deal from our spring experiences, and we have listened to the valuable feedback from our community to make effective change from our spring trials.

In the Middle School, students will operate similarly to how campus is open, **remaining in cohorts** throughout the school day.

In order to minimize the amount of time students are exposed to screens, students will have the opportunity for 3 synchronous class experiences daily.

All classes will meet on a **rotating schedule** that is patterned to eliminate any confusion. Synchronous class times will largely occur in the morning hours, with afternoon classes dedicated to small group instruction, individual meetings, and time for independent study of asynchronous class materials.

The schedule that students will follow will be very similar to if they were on-campus.



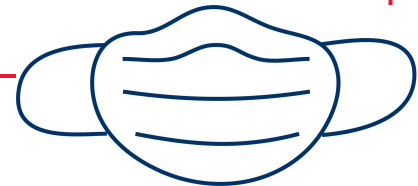
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On Campus: Health Protocols

Screenings: We may be conducting daily screenings for our faculty, staff, and students. These screenings may include questionnaires and temperature monitoring.

We ask that you check your student's temperature every morning before coming to school. If there is a temperature over 100° F (37.8° C), do not come to school. No student should take a medicine with a fever-reducer before coming to school.

Masks: In consultation with the many organizations identified on page 4 of this plan, face coverings are strongly believed to reduce the spread of COVID-19. St. Mark's is currently evaluating the ideal implementation of mask use for students and faculty. This includes, but is not limited to, when and where they should be worn and who is required to wear them.





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On Campus: Social Distancing

When on campus, we will practice social distancing. At this time, there are recommendations from a variety of health organizations, and we will develop a distancing practice that considers expert advice and the unique environment of our community. Our process for classrooms include:

- Measuring Classrooms
- Running the Rosner School Social Distancing Model to suggest safest configuration
- Setting the room per the model
- Tweaking the design to assure best teaching and learning





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On Campus: Social Distancing

In addition:

1. **Students will remain in classrooms** and faculty will rotate. This will eliminate touchpoints for our students, as well as expose them to fewer students.
2. A **pathway** for the safest entry and exit will be marked on each classroom's floor.
3. Classrooms that have items that may not be easily cleaned will be **removed from classrooms** as well as items such as bookshelves that might tempt students to reach out and touch.
4. **Lunches will be served in classrooms** to avoid exposure during lunch.





ST. MARK'S
EPISCOPAL SCHOOL

St. Mark's will employ the use of a **Red Cap**, who will restock cleaning and disinfection supplies throughout our campus and clean common areas. The Red Cap will wear a mask and gloves at all times.

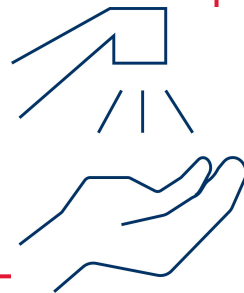
On Campus: Disinfection and Sanitation

Classrooms for our youngest learners have individual or shared bathrooms, where faculty can implement regular **hand washing** plans. Additional portable handwashing stations will be positioned:

- Outdoors during arrival duty to allow hand washing before entering campus
- In Hauser Hall
- In the Middle School Alleyway

Classrooms, offices, hallways, and stairwells will be **cleaned each evening** by our cleaning service, DTK. They will wipe down all surfaces, door handles, and countertops with bleach spray. They will also use the sanitizing defogger in classrooms each night.

A **deep cleaning can be scheduled** any time we can close the buildings for three or more days and in the case of any outbreak emergency.





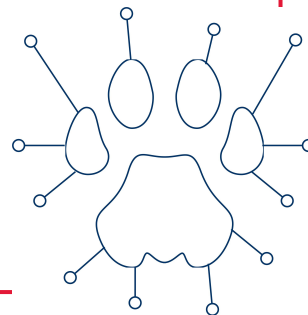
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Personal Accountability

Safe learning is a partnership between faculty and our families. As a school, we are confident that we can do our part.

We need you to do your part as well! Please:

- Restrict your family's exposure to large crowds
- Practice social distancing
- Teach your children the importance of good handwashing
- Do not bring your child to campus if anyone in your family has symptoms or has been exposed to anyone with COVID or untested symptoms
- Take our self-screening and temperature checks seriously
- Be patient with carpool and screening lines
- Be flexible. Things are changing regularly.
- Watch our website and please read our Friday messages thoroughly.



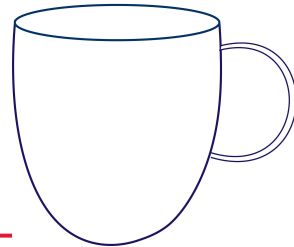


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Maintaining Community

We are still a community engaged, even if we are not together on campus in the same way we are accustomed to. We have made the difficult decision to start the school year with a **no volunteers or visitors on campus** policy. This will allow us to minimize exposure to our classrooms and students. We hope to loosen these restrictions as soon as we are able. **Arrival and Dismissal procedures** are currently being developed. As they are finalized, we we will share that information with families.

Be on the lookout for our event announcements and invitations via email. We still believe that events like Fresh Start, Primary School and Lower School Family Open House, Middle School Open House, New Parent Coffees, and Cocktails & Conversations have value, and we are looking forward to hosting these events in-person creatively or potentially virtually.





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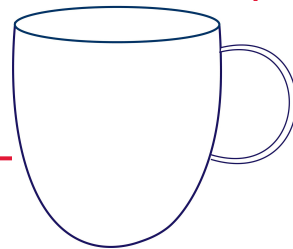
What is the Parent Guild?

The mission of the St. Mark's Parent Guild is to foster parent engagement in the school community, to strengthen school programs with financial and volunteer support, and to create meaningful and fun events for our students and families. The Parent Guild is our version of the PTA, and all current parents are automatically members.

Maintaining Community

If the Parent Guild is not able to meet on campus to start this year, we will hold virtual meetings once a month.

While certain safety protocols might mean that the Parent Guild will operate in a different way this year, we look forward to supporting our community in the best way possible. Be on the lookout for updates on all Parent Guild activities in the weekly Parent Guild Bulletin, emailed to parents every Tuesday.





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The emotional wellness of our students is of the utmost importance as we navigate this next school year.

Social and Emotional Health

Although physical health has been a primary focus during the COVID-19 pandemic, St. Mark's is committed to continue working with students through a whole-body approach.

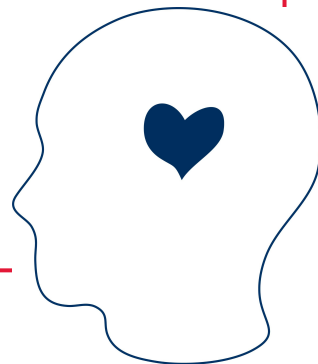
Boy World | Girl World will resume in-person or virtually
6th-8th Grades will start in September
5th Grade will start in January

Middle School Mental Health Classes and 2nd - 4th Grade Lessons with the Counselor will resume in-person or virtually

Student Observations will resume in-person

School Counselor appointments for students and families will resume in-person, or be available virtually

Parent Education talks will continue, either in-person or virtually





Student Life: Athletics, Extended Care, After School Clubs, and Chapel

We know that the St. Mark's experience includes nurturing the growth of the whole child, including his or her physical, emotional, and spiritual health. Our team is carefully evaluating how we can safely provide as much normalcy and consistency as possible in our athletics program, extended day programs, and chapel programming.





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If your child would like to participate in St. Mark's Athletics, please complete the 2020-2021 Lower School Athletics or the 2020-2021 Athletics Registration form on the portal.

Early registration helps in coordinating numbers of teams and game schedules.

Student Life: Athletics

We are eagerly planning for our traditional full athletic program for Middle and Lower School students in the fall of the 2020-2021 school year.

Since middle school athletics does not have a specific governing body, we will be monitoring and following all guidelines set forth by the National Federation of High Schools (NFHS), the University Interscholastic League (UIL), the Texas Association of Private and Parochial Schools (TAPPS) and the Greater Houston Athletic Conference (GHAC). These organizations give us guidelines in regard to which sports can and cannot be played, the implementation of wearing masks during competition, down to the number of practices and games that can be held in a season.





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Student Life: Extended Care and After School Clubs

We know that an important part of life at St. Mark's is the ability for students to remain on campus after school hours end. Our extended care and after school clubs offer families both supervision and fun for their children. We are carefully considering how we can safely provide these services in the fall.

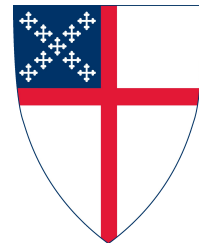




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Student Life: Chapel

At St. Mark's, our religious instruction provides an atmosphere of inquiry and learning for students in the Preschool 3s all the way through 8th grade. We select curriculum in our religion classes that is developmentally and age-appropriate for our students, as we seek to guide them along their spiritual journey with love and acceptance. No matter which scenario we find ourselves in during the fall, religion courses will continue for students. Additionally, our School Chaplain will provide online or in-person chapel services.





We are a community engaged!

Answers to frequently asked questions will continue to be updated on St. Mark's COVID-19 webpage (stmes.org/coronavirus), and more information will be shared throughout the summer.