



MATER DEI

CATHOLIC SCHOOL

2018 NATIONAL BLUE RIBBON
SCHOOL OF EXCELLENCE

Mary, May We Be A Reflection Of Your Hope And Peace

November 19, 2020

Dear Parents,

Good afternoon! This week has been busy preparing for the two-week shutdown ordered by the Montgomery County Health Department. We are grateful to the teachers in kindergarten through grade 8 for all they are doing to prepare the children for the eLearning experience. The children are as disappointed as we are to be facing another shutdown, but they are resilient and are working hard with their teachers to prepare for the next two weeks. There will be a total of six days of eLearning from **November 23rd to December 4th**. Mater Dei is scheduled to reopen on **Monday, December 7th**. **On November 25th and November 30th**, there will be no classes in addition to **Thanksgiving and Friday, November 27th**.

Many parents of our eLearning students have contacted us to say how well their children are doing this fall. Since the spring, we have had time to refine practices and expectations, which seem to be supporting the learning process for the children. For the next two weeks, the teachers will be providing instruction from their classrooms. We hope this will also add to a smooth transition for the students since the learning environment and schedules will be familiar.

Tomorrow, **Friday, November 20th**, you are invited to pick-up your child/children's crates filled with their books and school supplies. Many thanks to the parents who volunteered to help with this effort. We could still use help from 11:30 AM to 2:30 PM and 4:00 PM to 6:00 PM.

Please use [this link](#) to volunteer if you have some time.

The pick-up schedule is listed below:

11: 30 AM to 2:30 PM
***4:00 PM – 6:00 PM**

Please enter the schoolyard off Third Street. It would be helpful if all parents would turn on Third Street off Line Street.

*We will begin the 4:00 PM pick-up as soon as the buses leave the property. A teacher will be in the church parking lot to let you know when you may begin to line

up on Third Street. Please turn on Third Street off Line Street to enter the schoolyard.

It will not be necessary for you to complete the Health eTools link while your child/children will be eLearners. However, we ask you to contact us by email if your child/children become ill, were exposed to someone with COVID-19, or needed to get a COVID-19 test. We want to keep our school profile up to date.

We know that this two-week closure of our school is not easy for families or our children. We ask you to reach out to us if we can support you or your family. If any issues come up that are particular to the eLearning program, please call or email us. We want to eliminate as much frustration as possible for your family. We will be in school each day and available to assist you.

The following information will provide an overview of the eLearning program designed to create a seamless transition from the classroom to eLearning for the children of Mater Dei Catholic School.

Help Desk

We wanted to remind you about our excellent IT team, who are prepared to help parents and students with any issues related to a student's iPad or Chromebook. If you or your child experiences a technology problem, you are welcome to send an email to helpdesk@materdeicatholic.com with your child's name, homeroom, and a clear description of the issue. Some issues may include any iPad functions, including the camera or sound, and any apps that are not loading. The help desk will respond to acknowledge the ticket request with an automatic reply and then will contact that email address with a resolution or request for more information. This process is designed to allow teachers to concentrate on addressing students' instructional needs while teaching.

Live Instruction for Kindergarten through 8th Grade

During the two-week closure, our teachers will continue to work hard to provide our students with a high-quality and engaging experience. Teachers used time this week to help our in-person students prepare for eLearning by teaching them how to login to classes and use different apps that they will need. However, we recognize that each child is unique and will require different levels of support. We ask parents to do their best to be available to help your child or children throughout the day.

Zoom Calls

Due to the privacy setting on the Zoom calls, we ask that parents support us in only using each child's Mater Dei device to access live instruction via Zoom. These devices are connected to each student's Google account, allowing us to share classroom content easily.

Attendance

Teachers will still take attendance as if every student is in-person. Your cooperation to ensure your child is ready to login to their classes by 8:45 AM will help with this process. If your child is ill or unable to participate in eLearning, we respectfully ask you to follow the usual procedure of contacting the school office.

Schedules – School Day 8:45 AM to 2:30 PM

Your child's schedule will be posted on each teacher's website. Access to these schedules is restricted and only given to students in each classroom. In order to provide continuity of learning, teachers will be following the typical classroom

schedule students have been following all year. Students will still have breaks throughout the day as well as a lunch recess as indicated on the schedule. All live instruction will end at 2:30 PM for the school day to allow for Teacher Office Hours.

Teacher Office Hour – 2:30 PM to 3:30 PM during Instructional Days

Please know you are welcomed and encouraged to contact teachers with any concerns or questions. Teachers will reserve this office hour each instructional day to respond to parent questions or concerns. If a phone or Zoom conference is needed, teachers may also schedule those at this time. We ask parents for patience and understanding that regardless of when a communication is sent to a teacher, a response can be expected during this protected time.

SUGGESTIONS

Based upon our experiences last spring and having two instructional models this year, we have gathered a few helpful hints and strategies for parents to ensure a smooth transition into a complete virtual learning experience.

Organization of Materials

- Before students begin their live instruction, it would be helpful for students to have some assistance in checking to make sure they have all of their materials needed for eLearning before classes begin each day. Our in-person students have been using their Mater Dei crates to hold all of their books and materials needed to learn, and we hope that this similar practice at home will have each student feel prepared to learn during live instruction.

Workspaces

- Many of our families have created incredible workspaces in homes that allow students to attend their Zoom calls for live instruction. In order for students to maximize each learning experience, we ask parents to prepare spaces that eliminate as many distractions as possible. For example, sound from a television or background household conversations could be a distraction for students. Because we are highly encouraging students to participate in all of the learning activities in the classroom, fewer distractions allow students to remain focused on learning. Your help in securing a space where your child is ready to learn will be most helpful.

Sound

- To maximize the Zoom calls' sound quality during live instruction, we learned that it is most helpful for eLearning students to use headphones with a built-in microphone plugged into the Mater Dei iPad. This most especially applies when sitting next to a sibling attending classes in a different virtual classroom.
- We are fortunate to be able to use the Zoom platform to facilitate live instruction for your child. However, certain features can present challenges and distractions. Teachers may ask students to mute themselves at certain times when giving direct instruction. When asking a question or checking for understanding, teachers will provide a verbal prompt when students are to unmute themselves. It can be very distracting if students mute and unmute themselves on their own without direction. For our younger eLearners, some adult assistance might be needed as students learn how and when to mute and unmute themselves properly in response to a teacher's prompt.

Snack Schedule

- It would be most helpful if the students followed the same schedule of snack

and lunch breaks as all students would if they were in class. This will help set the tone for live instruction and mirror the same expectations students would have in person. Additionally, eating during live instruction could become a distraction for students. Please know that a simple water bottle is acceptable as students typically have them throughout the day. We are grateful for your support on this issue.

As we learned in the spring, patience, understanding, and clear communication are keys to making this eLearning experience work. We are continually learning, adjusting, and refining our instructional practices to meet our students' needs. We will approach these next two weeks with that same spirit of creativity and innovation to provide a strong Catholic education for your child/children. Thank you for your continued support in ensuring all of our students have a positive learning experience each day and your commitment to Mater Dei Catholic School. We wish your family a very blessed Thanksgiving! We are thankful for your family, and we consider your beautiful children our greatest blessings.

Most sincerely,

Miss Diane E. McCaughan
President

Miss Elizabeth A. Waltrich
Principal