

**ST. JOSEPH CATHOLIC
ELEMENTARY SCHOOL**

501 Cardinal Drive
Thibodaux, Louisiana 70301
(985) 446-1346



**RETURN TO SCHOOL
PLAN
AUGUST 2021**



Dear St. Joseph Catholic Elementary School Parents/Guardians,

Over the past couple of weeks we have been consulting and planning with the Diocesan Office of Catholic Schools utilizing guidance from our state and local public and health officials for the safe reopening of our schools in August. We have gained important insight into the required actions that must be taken to help prevent the spread of COVID-19 while still providing a challenging, effective, Christ-centered learning environment.

It is important to note that the policies and procedures that will be implemented in the upcoming school year will be utilized to mitigate the risk of COVID-19 fully aware there is no plan that can completely eliminate the possibility of transmission. We fully acknowledge and respect the fact that individuals have varied opinions, however as a school we have a responsibility to do all we can to provide the safest environment possible for our students, faculty, and staff. Through the guidance we have received, be assured we will do our very best to minimize the risk of coronavirus transmission at our school. Given the levels of COVID-19 in our communities, we expect that some students and staff will contract or be exposed to the virus when we return to school. We will continue to adhere to the recommended quarantine protocols for individuals who test positive and those determined to be a close contact of a positive case. As part of the Diocesan Return to School Plan, all schools are continuing their partnership with a local hospital to receive ongoing guidance, consultation, and resources.

At this time we would like to share with you some of the general guidelines that will be in place for the beginning of the 2021-2022 school year. These practices will continue to be updated and or adjusted as needed. We will be bound to any requirements introduced either by the state or the Diocesan Office of Catholic Schools during the upcoming school year and will comply with any mandates from civil authorities at the local, state, and federal levels.

The mission and vision of St. Joseph Catholic Elementary School is a vital one. Despite any challenges, rest assured we will continue to provide for the spiritual, moral, academic, and social growth of our students. We look forward to a very successful school year and pledge to work diligently to keep our students, faculty, and staff as healthy and safe as possible. You will be kept abreast of any adjustments to this plan should it become necessary. Best wishes for a great school year!

Sincerely,

Gerard J. Rodrigue, Jr., Principal



**THE DIOCESE OF HOUMA-THIBODAU
RETURN TO SCHOOL TASK FORCE**

Established by:

**Suzanne Delaune Troxclair, Superintendent
Office of Catholic Schools**

Task Force Members:

Jill Arabie	Stacey Dupre	Melissa Robertson
Becki Badeaux	Fr. Simon Peter Engurait	Tim Robichaux
Marissa Bagala	Renee Gautreaux	Gerard Rodrigue
Peter Boudreaux	Jeremy Gueldner	Jamie Rodrigue
Dr. Nicole Bourgeois	Kris Guillot	Jennifer Russell
Ree Case	Lydia Landry	Charlotte Smith
Mary Cavell	Christina Lasserre	Amanda Talbot
Kelli Cazayoux	Lyddy Lindley	Cheryl Thibodaux
Alyce Charpentier	Cathy Long	Tricia Thibodaux
Michelle Chiasson	Ginny Medina-Hamilton	Lonnie Thibodeaux
Steve Crispino	Dr. Cindy Martin	Kayla Vicknair
Jami Chadwick	Sarah Matherne	Ben Walker
Jimmie Danos	Kaylee Pitre	Dr. Guy Zeringue
Gwen Duet	Monica Rau	

MESSAGE FROM THE BISHOP

My dear people of God in the Diocese of Houma-Thibodaux,

The month of August always brings about excitement and new school year jitters for many as our schools begin to open their doors and welcome thousands of our children back into the classrooms.

When I was in elementary school I attended Catholic of Pointe Coupee, and the excitement I would have the days and nights before our school opened was always nerve-racking. I knew I would meet new teachers, make new friends and learn new things in the upcoming days. My mom and dad would be sure our uniforms were ready, school bags were packed and we knew which bus to get on each day. As we enter this new school year, I will be praying for all of the families, students, administrators, faculty and staff of our schools as they return to routines, or enter upon new routines, and deal with excitement and expectations.

I want to state that I am incredibly proud of our teachers, administrators and our parish youth formation leaders and volunteers who have gone above and beyond this past year during such challenging times. Even throughout this summer, our teachers and parish coordinators of youth formation were busy training and learning new strategies for the classrooms ensuring our children receive their best.

This past summer our Office of Parish Support hosted our diocesan Youth Summit where our parish coordinators of youth formation gathered for three days to pray together and learn best strategies for our youth as we enter a new catechetical year in our parish schools of religion.

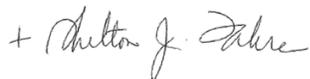
In addition, behind the scenes, the teachers and staff of our Catholic schools attended a multitude of professional development sessions, learning about new

technology advancements and strategies to best educate our children. I greatly appreciate their willingness and desire to ensure the best for the children in our parish schools of religion and Catholic schools.

We look forward to opening our classrooms again this school year, as well as reengaging in our parishes' schools of religion. The mission of the church is to form disciples, and our Catholic schools and parish schools of religion are the most impactful way for us to live out our mission. In fact, our Catholic schools are by far one of the largest ministries in our diocese, serving almost 5,000 students across our 11 Catholic schools. The faith formation of our youth is at the top of our priorities here in our diocese. I want to personally wish our administrators, staff, volunteers, families and children a wonderful, fruitful school year. I pray that Christ will be in your hearts and your minds today and always. May God bless the 2021 – 2022 school year!

Please know of my continued prayers for you.

Yours in Christ,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Shelton J. Fabre".

+ Most Rev. Shelton J. Fabre

Bishop of the Diocese Houma-Thibodaux

MESSAGE FROM THE SUPERINTENDENT



Dear Diocese of Houma-Thibodaux Catholic Schools Family,

The 2020-2021 school year in the Diocese of Houma-Thibodaux Catholic schools was, indeed, one like no other. The impact of COVID-19 was definitely evident, as our communities, state, country, and world felt the impact of a global pandemic like most have never experienced. Our Catholic school family was not exempt from the direct and indirect effects of the virus. However, the beauty of the deep faith and commitment to our Lord and Savior was just as evident. Through it all- the triumphs, the tragedies, the disappointments, and the celebrations- one thing remained true. God was, and IS, with us!

Through the diligent efforts of our dedicated Catholic schools community, the students we serve continued to thrive and grow spiritually, emotionally, and academically, despite the challenges before them! Students, parents, teacher-ministers, school leaders, staffs, clergy, and all who make up our Catholic schools community committed themselves to doing all they could to make our 2020-2021 school year all that it could be! Through the careful and intentional work of so many, our schools completed a full year of in-person instruction, affording the students we serve an outstanding academic education in a Christ-centered environment, culminating in beautiful graduations and end-of-year Eucharistic celebrations and closing programs.

The commitment of our students, teacher-ministers, parents, staffs, clergy, school and diocesan leaders, and all who worked tirelessly to provide safe and successful school environments is what allowed the 2020-2021 school year to be the success that it was. Through creativity and commitment, our students flourished! Their resiliency, through all the many challenges that could have caused some to waiver, allowed the year to be one of formation, learning, growth, and wonderful memories that will always be with them.

Our school families did not allow the adjustments to physical school environments to pause their efforts to live the Church's social teaching. The beauty of the ongoing formation of our students and larger school communities was evident in so many actions and activities. Whether it was welcoming and assisting students and their families who had been displaced due to Hurricane Laura into our school communities, collecting and delivering gifts of thanks and prayer for the COVID-19 front line workers in area hospitals, donating money to the Missionary Childhood Association that is used to build schools, hospitals, provide medical care, food, and clothing in mission countries, volunteering at the Louis Children's Home for abused and neglected children, or walking alongside a fellow student, co-worker, or parent who experienced the illness or loss of a loved one, our school families continued to make the Mission possible through their call to action- through examples seen and, many times, unseen.

Our students have also continued to thrive in their many curricular and extracurricular school experiences, including winning the South Louisiana Quiz Bowl Championship, several state championships in Varsity athletics, hosting Right to Life school-wide assemblies, and earning more than \$10 million in college scholarships in addition to their TOPS academic awards by our graduating classes! Congratulations to our students and all those who make up their support systems, allowing them to set their goals and give it their all!

With a new school year upon us, we are excited to embrace all that is to come for our Catholic schools family with great hope for a new faith-filled and successful school year! In a time when many dioceses throughout the country are experiencing a decline in Catholic school enrollment, we are blessed to report an increase in our total enrollment for the 2021-2022 school year! What a blessing it is to have some many of our families entrust their children into our care and to afford us the opportunity to minister to them!

Today, the joy, wonder, and blessings of the 2021-2022 school year is at our doorstep. The Diocese of Houma-Thibodaux, once again, is diligently preparing for the safe return of our students and employees to our schools. Utilizing our Task Force comprised of school administrators, teachers, medical health professionals, parents, school board members, community leaders, and diocesan leadership, a carefully reviewed and revised Return to School Plan has been promulgated. The

intent of the guidelines is to aid our schools in their individual plans for their safe operation so our employees, students, and families feel secure and confident as our new year commences. We remain committed to our priorities of safety, presence, and growth as we return to school:

- *SAFETY- The diocese is committed to utilizing appropriate safety measures in the context of a return to work and schools.*
- *PRESENCE- The diocese is committed to keeping our schools open and do not want to burden parents with challenging schedules that would make it difficult to work.*
- *GROWTH- The diocese wants our children to continue their academic progress in a safe, secure, and Christ-centered environment in our schools as we work in the ministry of Catholic education to form the whole child.*

Indeed, the impacts of COVID-19 remain a serious challenge to our schools and larger communities. Understanding the fluidity of the situation, the Return to School Plan is a living document that will be updated as needed as we respond to additional guidance received from the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), the Louisiana Department of Health (LDH), the Louisiana Department of Education (LDOE), the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education (BESE), and our local medical partners and leaders. Our schools will post their Return to School Plans on their school websites, updating as needed.

The Diocese of Houma-Thibodaux is grateful for the deep commitment of its school families to the ministry of Catholic education and looks forward to welcoming its students and staff back to school. With Jesus Christ at our side, we are full of hope and ready to embark on our 2021-2022 school year!

Blessings,



Suzanne Delaune Troxclair

**St. Joseph Catholic Elementary School
Return to School Plan & Procedures**

***PLEASE NOTE THAT THIS PLAN IS A LIVING DOCUMENT AND MAY CHANGE OR BE ALTERED IN ORDER TO COMPLY WITH FURTHER DIRECTIVES AND/OR GUIDANCE FROM DIOCESAN, LOCAL, STATE, AND NATIONAL OFFICIALS.**

***St. Joseph Catholic Elementary School is working cooperatively through a medical partnership established by the Diocese with Thibodaux Regional Health System to guide, address, and support the health safety needs of our school.**

FACE COVERING

- **Inside school facilities**, masks are mandated for all employees and students age 5 and above, and all children enrolled in a kindergarten program. Any child between the ages of 2 and 5 who is not enrolled in a kindergarten program is strongly encouraged to wear a face covering.
- **While outdoors, all fully vaccinated and unvaccinated adults and students do not need to mask if they adhere to physical distancing requirements.** It is strongly encouraged that unvaccinated individuals wear masks in crowded outdoor settings or during activities that involve sustained close contact with people who are not fully vaccinated.

HAND SANITIZER/WIPES//DISINFECTANTS

- Hand sanitizer will be provided in each classroom by the school. Students **WILL** be allowed to bring and carry their own **UNSCENTED** hand sanitizer.
- The school will support healthy hygiene behavior by utilizing adequate supplies such as soap, hand sanitizer, paper towels, tissue, disinfectant spray, and disposable gloves.
- All “touched items” in the classroom will be sanitized as needed. Common areas that are frequently touched such as toilets, urinals, faucets, etc. will be sanitized periodically throughout the day.

WATER SYSTEM/BOTTLES

- All water fountains will be turned **OFF** and covered to avoid attempted use or touching.
- We will be installing new water fountains throughout school that have integrated no touch water bottle refill stations. The school will continue to provide bottled water to students until the new water fountains are installed.
- **Clear water bottles with the school logo will be provided for all NEW students.** The only water bottle allowed for all students is this clear one with the school logo on it. All water bottles should be labeled with the student name on it. Additional or replacement water bottles are available for purchase. The order form can be found in the School Announcement section on PlusPortals. Students who bring their own lunch are allowed to bring an extra bottle of water in their lunch box. This bottle must also be in a CLEAR

container. Please do not put water bottles in school bags as there is a risk of leakage that could damage books/notebooks.

BUS TRANSPORTATION

- Buses will be operating at 100% capacity and as required by Presidential Executive Order No. 13998, **ALL PASSENGERS** on a school bus, regardless of age or grade level, **MUST** wear a facial covering while using transportation.
- **The gate between St. Joseph and E. D. White will remain closed to use for the time being.**

ARRIVAL/MONITORING/SCREENING

- **TEMPERATURE CHECKS** will no longer be done.
- Students will report directly to their homeroom classroom upon arrival to school.
- If your child is not feeling well or has a fever **PLEASE DO NOT SEND THEM TO SCHOOL.** As a reminder, a child must be fever free **for at least 24 hours with no fever reducing medication** before they can return to school. It is imperative that we continue to have your full cooperation in this regard.
- Parents are asked to conduct daily symptom screenings and to monitor their child for the following symptoms before coming to school:
 - Fever
 - Chills
 - Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing
 - New cough
 - New loss of taste or smell
 - Muscle pain
 - Headache
 - Sore throat
 - Rash
- Also consider if any members of your household have been in close contact (within 6 feet for at least 15 minutes) in the last 14 days with someone diagnosed with COVID-19, or has any health department or health care provider been in contact with you and advised you to quarantine?
- **Visitors to campus** are limited to essential personnel only. Visits should be limited to emergency situations - we encourage you to communicate with us via school phone or email.
- Please try to **schedule appointments for your child** outside of school hours.
- We highly value our **volunteers**, however in the interest of everyone's health and safety, you will be notified when volunteering on the school campus can be resumed. Know that we are very grateful for your willingness to share your time and talent with our school family.

CLASSROOM SET UP/ARRANGEMENT

- Classrooms will be arranged in a manner to provide social distancing to the greatest extent possible.
- There will be **NO** grouping of desks or students working in groups directly across from one another.
- There will be **NO SHARING OF SCHOOL SUPPLIES**. The student may **ONLY USE THEIR OWN SUPPLIES**.

CURRICULUM/INSTRUCTION

Our goal is to secure curriculum-driven instruction while protecting the students' educational opportunities within a Christ-centered environment. The curriculum is based on the religious and educational mission and vision of the school.

Traditional/Non-Traditional School Setting

Our students will be returning to a “brick and mortar” school environment with in-class instruction. If in-person instruction is deemed inadvisable, our school will continue with a comprehensive distance learning program. In that case, the logistics and planning considerations to be made include technology support, developing and delivering high-quality online instruction, supporting Catholic Identity, and maintaining community. Our teachers are prepared to implement a distance learning program.

- **Google Classroom will be utilized extensively** for both in-person instruction and distance learning should that platform become necessary.
- Students will remain in their homeroom classroom throughout the day. 4th thru 7th grade students will remain in their homeroom class and teachers will rotate to the classrooms according to the master schedule of periods/subjects.
- Students in grades **kindergarten through 7th grade are to bring their own ear buds in a zip lock bag labeled with their name** to school daily for use when technology is incorporated into instruction (i.e. iPad and Chromebook usage).

CATHOLIC IDENTITY

- **Catholic schools have a two-fold purpose:** providing an education that is academically excellent and one that is deeply rooted in Catholic identity. The spiritual mission of Jesus Christ is the intention of Catholic Schools. Spiritual and academic experiences in Catholic Schools enable students to strengthen their relationship with Jesus and apply their faith to daily life as Missionary Disciples.
- Students will receive daily instruction in the Catholic faith.
- We will continue to open and close each day in prayer and pray a decade of the rosary as a school family on Mondays or the first day we return from a holiday.
- **We are unable to gather in large groups** so we will not be able to gather as an entire school in the gym for masses.

- We will continue to have masses in the gym on Fridays at 8:10 a.m. and on holy days of obligation. The sponsoring class and the other two sections of that grade level will attend mass in the gym with all others celebrating mass in their classroom via Google Meet. Example - 7A sponsors the mass; 7B and 7C attend in the gym. **Parents of the homeroom class sponsoring the mass may attend in person.** The choir will sing for our school masses, but will be limited in size to allow for recommended social distancing protocols.
- The only entrance to the campus for masses will be through the gate by the gym/music building. Use the main doors to the gym and sit in the chairs provided against the back wall. **To ensure health and safety protocols, you are kindly asked not to congregate, mingle, or visit with students before or after mass.**

OPEN HOUSE

- Open House will be held on campus this year utilizing the following provisions:
 1. To minimize the number of people in each classroom we ask that **ONLY 1 parent attend.** Face coverings/masks are strongly encouraged. Please observe social distancing to the greatest extent possible.
 2. We will not assemble as a group beforehand in the gym.
 3. Parents are asked to report directly to their child's homeroom class.
 4. 3rd thru 7th grade parents will remain in the child's homeroom class and teachers will rotate to the different classrooms to address parents.
 5. **Open House will be held on Thursday, August 19th** according to the following schedule:

6:00-6:45 p.m.	Grades PK, 1st, 3rd, 4th, and 6th
7:00-7:45 p.m.	Grades K, 2nd, 5th, and 7th
 6. In keeping with health and safety protocols, we kindly ask that you not congregate or mingle and leave campus immediately after the Open House ending times.

RECESS

- The morning and afternoon recesses will be held outside with designated times and playground areas for each grade level. These areas will rotate each week to allow students access to the various areas of the playground.

FOOD SERVICES

- You are reminded that the USDA has approved **FREE BREAKFAST AND LUNCH for the entire 2021-2022 school year.**
- Students **will be allowed to bring their own lunch** if the parent desires. If the decision is made for the student to bring their lunch, they must bring it every day-switching back and forth between bringing their lunch and eating the cafeteria lunch is not allowed. Students bringing their own lunch must abide by the following guidelines: 1) The lunch should be a

balanced meal. 2) **No carbonated beverages, chocolate, candy, or chips OF ANY KIND are allowed** with the exception of a whole grain chip, such as Sun Chips. 3) No food is to be sent in “fast food” wrappers. 4) **No food containing peanut butter or any other nut product, including Nutella, is allowed.** 5) If a pre-packaged lunch such as a “Lunchable” is brought, any candy is to be removed before bringing it to school. 6) The lunch drink must be of a size that can be stored in their lunch box/bag, preferably one that is disposable.

- Students choosing to eat breakfast will do so in the cafeteria.
- Due to space limitations and time constraints, the lunch procedure will be as follows: Pre-K, Kindergarten, 1st grade, and 4th grade will eat in the cafeteria. All other grades will pick up their lunch from the cafeteria and return to the classroom to eat.

HALLWAYS/RESTROOMS

- A **limited number of students** will be allowed in the hallways and restrooms at any given time to provide for social distancing measures.

DISMISSAL

- Dismissal procedures will be conducted in the same manner as last year. The old St. Joseph Hospital was demolished over the summer, but we will continue to use the parking lot for our car line. Please continue to enter from La. Hwy. 1 - Pre-K and Kindergarten follow the blue arrows; 1st thru 7th grade follow green arrows. Please be reminded that the health and safety of our students and employees will take precedence over speed, so your cooperation and patience is requested and appreciated.
- Pre-K and Kindergarten parents are reminded that there is **NO LEFT TURN ALLOWED** when exiting the parking lot after picking up your child.

BEFORE/AFTER CARE

- **All drop off of students** who will be attending before care **is to be in the car rider area** on Menard Street.
- Students attending after care will be divided into groups as necessary to be in line with recommended protocols.

COUNSELING SERVICES

- Our school counselor is available and ready to assist as needed when we return to school.
- Tips and resources for your information will be shared electronically in PlusPortals and/or Google Classroom.

BAND/CHOIR

- Students will participate in band and choir with the recommended safety protocols in place.

SPORTS TEAMS/CHEERLEADERS

- School-sponsored sports teams and cheerleading squad will take place provided faculty and volunteer coaches/moderators can be secured and recommended safety protocols in place.

RETURNING TO SCHOOL FOLLOWING INFECTION OR CLOSE CONTACT EXPOSURE

- We will follow the diocesan guidelines that are guided by the CDC and LA Department of Health in regards to isolation and/or quarantine protocols for students and faculty members who contract COVID-19 or are a close contact to someone who tested positive for the virus.
- Information and/or guidance in regards to isolation/quarantine protocols will be obtained as needed through our partnership with Thibodaux Regional Health System.