

Gethsemane

EARLY LEARNING CENTER



The mission of Gethsemane Lutheran School is to partner with families to provide a Christian education where academic excellence and faith formation walk hand in hand. We celebrate all students as children of God, nurturing their development in mind, body, and spirit to equip them as servants of Christ in the world.

The current global COVID-19 pandemic has prompted unprecedented reflection on how to best educate children while considering their overall social, emotional, physical, intellectual, and spiritual health. Having deeply considered all these factors, the leadership of Gethsemane Lutheran School has concluded that what is ultimately best for our students and families is that we open the 2020- 2021 school year on-campus and in-person. This re-opening is contingent on having a well thought-out, data-informed system of health and safety protocols implemented from day one.

It is with great joy and thanksgiving that we look forward to, once again, coming together to live, work, and play in Christian Community! The following health and safety protocols reflect just how much we do truly value this

opportunity. All of the following policies and procedures are designed to keep both our students and staff healthy, so that we might continue to do school together and in-person. Because Gethsemane exists for students, their health and safety is of paramount concern. However, the safety of faculty and staff, who are in higher risk categories than students, is also vital, because a healthy staff is critical for our ability to carry on operations and serve students and families. We have all learned that things regularly change, sometimes quickly, in the midst of this pandemic. Therefore, the following procedures and protocols are, of course, subject to change.

BEFORE-SCHOOL SCREENINGS & ENTRANCE PROCEDURES

Parents are asked to evaluate their children's health every day before sending them to school. Children that have had a fever or vomited within the past 24 hours should remain at home. Every student entering Gethsemane will have their temperatures taken before being allowed to enter the building. Additionally, any parent or building visitor will have temperatures taken before being allowed entrance.

When students are dropped off parents must walk them inside the front door and sign them in while their temperature is taken. Parents should not leave until their

child's temperature has been taken, and they have been cleared. This will take place right inside the front entrance of the school doors. Parents should wear a face mask when entering the building for any reason.

Following the school day we are asking that parents pick up their child on the sidewalk outside the main school doors. Students will be brought out to the front entrance to be picked up.

ENHANCED SANITATION MEASURES

- Hand sanitizer will be available throughout the school. Teachers will dispense hand sanitizer for preschool students.
- Table surfaces will be sanitized before each use.
- All common areas and frequently touched surfaces (door handles, counters, trash containers) will be cleaned throughout the day.
- Restrooms will be cleaned twice a day.
- A plan to teach/remind students about healthy sanitation practices will be implemented throughout the year.

ENHANCED IN-SCHOOL SAFETY MEASURES

Teachers will work with preschool students to encourage physical distancing whenever possible. Toys, art supplies, and manipulatives will be cleaned between use. Soft toys, such as stuffed animals are difficult to clean and will be removed from the classroom.

Masks

Face masks, covering nose and mouth, will be worn by teachers at all times while in the building, except when eating and drinking, participating in aerobic activities, or while outside and distanced. Preschool students are not required to wear face masks but are encouraged to do so. According to the Minnesota Department of Health (MDH): Children between the ages of 2 and 5 years old are not required to wear face coverings, but are encouraged to wear a face covering when in public if they can do so reliably in compliance with CDC guidance on how to wear cloth face coverings (ie: without frequently touching or removing the face covering). Older children, school staff, and adult visitors will be required to wear a mask when in our building.

Classrooms

The World Health Organization (WHO) recommends that student work spaces be at least 3 to 6 feet apart, and the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) also recommends a distance of 3 to 6 feet when feasible. Surfaces will be cleaned between groups of children. High touch areas such

as table and counter surfaces, light switches, door knobs, etc will be cleaned frequently throughout the day.

Lunch

Student seating will be spread out at the lunch table. Surfaces will be sanitized before and after use.

Teachers and Staff

Teachers and Staff will abide by the same health and safety protocols as students and visitors.

Outdoors

The outdoors will be used as much as possible.

BEFORE AND AFTER-SCHOOL PROCEDURES

Parents are requested to use the before and aftercare program as little as possible during this time. If you have alternative options we would love to limit the number of students in our extended day program. When students are dropped off parents must walk them inside the front door and sign them in while their temperature is taken. Parents should not leave until their child's temperature has been taken and they have been cleared. This will take place right inside the front entrance of the school doors. Parents should

wear a mask when entering the building for any reason. Following the school day we are asking that parents pick up their child on the sidewalk outside the main school doors. Students will be brought out to the front entrance to be picked up. Parents who pick up their children from the extended care program should enter the school doors where a staff member will check out your child for the day.

PROTOCOLS FOR SUSPECTED OR POSITIVE CASES OF COVID-19

Students who exhibit Covid-19 symptoms during the school day will be removed from the rest of the class, and a staff member will remain with them until the parents/guardians arrive to pick them up. Parents are required to pick students up within an hour from when they are notified. Students sent home with flu-like symptoms must be tested for COVID-19. Parents must notify the school of the test results. Information regarding this test will be kept confidential and will not appear in a student's record. Non-confidential, non-identifying information will be provided to local health officials, staff, and school families in accordance with the American With Disabilities Act (ADA) or the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA), as recommended by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control. If the student has been ill without testing positive for

COVID-19, he/she may not return to school until fever free and symptom-free for 72 hours without the use of over-the-counter medications. Students who test positive for COVID-19 must remain quarantined for 10 days prior to returning to school. Students who live in the same household as the infected person are also required to quarantine themselves for 14 days prior to returning to school. If a parent, sibling attending another school, or anyone else in a student's household should test positive for COVID-19, that student must quarantine for 14 days prior to returning to school. If the school becomes aware that its own in-school safety protocols were not followed during a time when a student was known to be infected, or that an infected student interacted with other Gethsemane students outside of school in an unsafe manner (more than 15 minutes, unmasked, without physical distancing), all students who interacted with the infected student in an unsafe manner will also be required to self-quarantine for 14 days. Depending on the circumstances, larger groups of students may need to be quarantined. To the extent that the school is aware, parents will be notified if their student was within 3-6 feet, for more than 15 minutes, of a student who is known to have tested positive for COVID-19.

HOW YOU CAN HELP

- Please pray regularly for our students, teachers, staff, and families. Pray for safety, health, wisdom, and the Joy of the Lord to transform even the greatest challenges of this year.
- Please be patient and gracious with our administration, teachers, and students. They are all attempting to do their best to serve students and families in incredibly challenging times.
- Please share about Gethsemane Early Learning Center and Gethsemane Lutheran School with families who might like to learn more.
- Consider donating. We are accepting donations to the Gethsemane Lutheran Coronavirus Assistance Fund. This fund allows for tuition grants to Gethsemane families who have significant need because of lost income due to the coronavirus.

We live in turbulent times. Stress, anxiety, and depression are on the rise. Heated divisions over culture, politics, and even how to respond to COVID-19 all too often bring out the worst in people. Young people are not immune to any of this. But praise be to our God! It is, in fact, in times like this that the Gospel of Jesus shines all the more brightly! “Do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God!” says our God (Isaiah 41:10). There are many things about this upcoming school year that are not ideal and will be hard for both students and faculty alike. We know this

and will acknowledge this. But even more, into the very hardest aspects of this coming year, we will creatively and consistently speak the Joy of the Lord. “The joy of the Lord is our Strength” (Nehemiah 8:10). This joy is the very power of God. We know that this joy will take even the greatest challenges of this year and transform them into vehicles of life! The mission of Gethsemane will be fulfilled. God will use this year, perhaps even more than in years past, to lead, teach, and inspire students to become all that He would have them be!