



July 28, 2020

Dear Parents and Guardians:

COVID-19 continues to affect nearly every aspect of how our families, businesses, and schools go about their daily work. Many of us at DeSmet School District have been gathering the past few months to develop a plan for how our schools can provide a safe and secure setting for students to learn. The enclosed plan builds upon all that we learned last spring when, with your help, our teachers and students quickly moved to home-based instruction.

DeSmet School District serves students with transparency and accountability to ensure as many people as possible have a voice in the school's operations. The dialogue between school leaders and citizens has helped make sure our students learn in a manner that reflects the circumstances in our community. Our goal to resume instruction and operations at our schools relies on the following priorities: a healthy and safe setting for students, staff, and the community; helpful support of teachers and staff; and responsible financial and operational procedures. We intend to meet this goal by upholding these priorities.

This plan is the work of the board of trustees, administrative team, employees, parents, students, state and local health officials, and community members all collaborating to identify how instruction will be delivered to students; how gatherings and events will take place on school property if and when appropriate; how the health and safety of staff and students will be protected and preserved while schools are open; and how financial and operational functions of the school district will continue during this public health emergency. School leaders have considered all available options and perspectives to make decisions that reflect the circumstances in our community.

By listening to these voices, we have implemented measures throughout the District to promote a safe and healthy setting for learning, teaching, and working. Our District's plan relies on the practical application of scientific information to transform instruction, cleaning and disinfecting, transportation, food services, and activities. The District has implemented:

*Physical distancing by reconfiguring classrooms and gathering spaces, developed school arrival and departure procedures including temperature checks;*

*Installed sanitizing stations, hygiene signs, barriers and other measures to assist with individual protection;*

*Purchased material and supplies to implement all aspects of the plan. Further, the District requires students, visitors, staff, and teachers to wear a mask while in indoor campus environments.*

*We are confident these and other proactive measures outlined in the plan will meet our shared goal of returning to student learning in the school. While not our intention to revert to instruction away from the schools, the School District understands that even with our best prevention efforts, it is possible that there may be an outbreak of this highly contagious virus in our community. To prepare for this possibility, the District has developed a dynamic home-based instruction program in the event the schools are required to close for any period of time. This program will also be available to students during a period of instruction in the school if a family needs a home-based instruction accommodation. If you would like more information about how to request home-based instruction, please send an email to the address noted below.*

Our School District is innovative, agile, and ready to get back to school. We've worked to think of everything to make sure the students can come back to their classrooms, work with their teachers, and enjoy their friends. If there is something you think we have missed or if you have questions, please let us know by sending an email to [mdriessen@desmetschool.org](mailto:mdriessen@desmetschool.org). Our School District remains committed to maintaining timely and relevant communications with staff, families and the community as this new school year begins. With your help, your students' enthusiasm, and our teachers' leadership, we'll meet this challenge and have a successful school year.

Sincerely,



Aaron Foster

School Board Chair



Matthew Driessen

Principal