

Maine Catholic Schools Remote Learning Option

Maine Catholic Schools meet and exceed the state minimum requirements for academic coursework. When enrolling their child, parents may choose from two separate learning models should circumstances merit that such options be made available. Once a particular model is selected and agreed upon among all parties, this model will be expected to be implemented based upon the agreement. Changes will occur only at the school administrator's discretion. Ideally, students would continue on the traditional learning path, but our school wants to allow room for alternative models when and if appropriate.

Traditional Learning - Students report to the school building daily and follow the regular daily routine.

Remote Learning - Students attend their Maine Catholic School virtually from their homes; they follow the daily routines with adaptations during certain times of the day if necessary (See Remote Learning Guidelines and Policies).

Entire School Remote Learning - Understanding the need to provide as much continuity and structure as possible when the traditional school setting is either unavailable due to scheduling or closed for an extended period of time due to unforeseen circumstances, individual grade levels or all grade levels PK-12 will be required, if necessary, to engage in remote, home-based learning.

Remote Learning Guidelines and Policies

Recognizing that some families may need and/or prefer a home-based educational option, Maine Catholic schools will offer virtual, remote learning for students. The virtual classroom's schedule will mirror that of the traditional classroom, with slight modifications when and if necessary. Students within a virtual classroom will have similar curriculum, lessons, and assigned work to those students within the traditional classroom. Remote learners will be expected to follow school policies and meet school and classroom expectations just like those in the traditional Catholic School setting, with specific modifications applicable to the home setting. Remote students will be viewed as Maine Catholic School students, and they and their families as members of the school community. Special attention in the following areas should be considered for any family interested in remote learning.

- **Attendance** - Students are expected to report to homeroom and all classes on time. Attendance will be taken, documented and kept on file. Parents are responsible for reporting all absences due to illness and early releases, following Attendance school policy. A formula that tracks attendance will be used to determine

tardiness, half-day absences, or a full day absence when necessary. Adaptations for attendance requirements for grades PK-2 will be shared at the time their schedules are shared.

- **Resources** - Students will be issued a school device, if needed, textbooks, workbooks, and other school-distributed supplies/resources in order to access lessons and complete schoolwork. Students will be assigned a Google Account and be provided any necessary passwords to access Google and other online resources. Proper care for all school property is expected per school policies and fees will be incurred for any damages. The school's Acceptable Use of Technology policy will apply. All technological trouble shooting should be directly communicated to classroom teachers. Parents are responsible for securing internet access within the home. If this is problematic, they should reach out to an internet provider for special school internet offers.
- **Learning Dispositions** - Students are expected to be engaged in all learning activities; engaged students must:
 - Attend classes in uniform
 - Come to class prepared
 - Work in an appropriate setting, at a desk or table
 - Be attentive
 - Participate and seek help when needed
 - Have their camera on with a clear view of their face and learning space
 - Make productive use of time
 - Be organized with resources readily available, inclusive of desk, chair, etc.
 - Use headphones (if needed) to limit distractions
 - Follow and meet classroom rules and expectations
- **Member of School Community** - All students will be considered full members of their grade level, class and school community. Students are encouraged to join classmates on virtual field trips, participate in extracurriculars, and be involved in school/parish functions.
- **Discipline** - The Catholic School's Code of Conduct will apply to all remote learning students; should the need for a detention be assigned, a virtual meeting will be held with the parents.
- **Communication** - Because remote learning requires a higher level of trust and independence on the part of home-based learners, extra diligence is required from parents and students in communicating and staying informed with student progress and school related information.
- **Assessment/Standardized Testing** - Students will be required to complete all assessments similar to those in the traditional setting when standardized tests are administered (NWEA).
- **Limitations** - Students will receive live instruction; however, the overall experience will not be the same. Teachers will monitor and interact with virtual learners, but

students should not expect any special one on one attention. Additionally, the full feel of being present within the classroom will not exist.

- **Pick-up/Drop-off** - At certain intervals during home-based remote learning, an exchange of resources and or completed hard copies of work may be required. These days will be communicated to parents with as much notice as possible.
- **Daily Schedule** - Remote learning will follow an adapted schedule for the school day that allows students to follow a structured schedule and have independent time to allow for the completion of assignments. Utilizing the Google Apps for Education, students will receive direct instruction in grades 3-8, with lessons being delivered with a combination of video and direct instruction for grades PK-2. Specific academic schedules will be shared with families and posted on our school website when and if the necessity presents itself.
- **Completion of Work** - All school assignments, assessments, projects, and or related work are expected to be completed. Parents assume responsibility to ensure that this takes place. Completed work is an important part of a child's learning and assists teachers in determining each child's academic growth and whether or not he or she has demonstrated adequate proficiency at respective grade level to merit retention, placement, or promotion. A virtual meeting will be scheduled with parents to address issues if necessary.
 - **Retention** - A student has not demonstrated grade level understanding of learning standards; repeating the present grade level is in the best interest in the child in becoming proficient at the necessary skills and knowledge.
 - **Placement** - A student has not adequately demonstrated grade level understanding of learning standards; repeating the present grade level is not seen to be in the best interest of the student and or teachers because of age and or social and emotional factors. A student who is placed may be requested to enroll in another school should factors taken into consideration for such a designation result from poor attendance and or lack of work completion.
 - **Promotion** - A student has adequately demonstrated grade level understanding of learning standards and is promoted to the next grade level.

Best practices for all youth-serving adults:

- **Utilize technology (devices, applications and platforms) sanctioned by the organization.** This also includes maintaining private your personal phone number whenever possible, as most online video conferencing options have built-in audio and voice options.
- **Keep personal social media accounts private.** Adults working or volunteering with youth should not use their personal emails or social media accounts to communicate with minors (or their personal phone numbers). If the organization does not have its own official account for you to use, work with supervisors to create one that allows them to also have oversight.

- **Avoid "friending" or communicating with minors using personal accounts or private messages.** Under no circumstances should a caring adult be utilizing a personal account to send a "friend" request to a minor who is in their care, or known to them, because of work or ministry.
- **Meet with minors in online groups, never alone or 1:1 without the explicit permission of a supervisor, as well as the ability for a supervisor to enter the session at any time during the instruction.** Virtual meetings can include other students or parents to maintain transparency. Other adults in your organization should also be included when possible and/or necessary for proper oversight.
- **Maintain appropriate communication with both minors and other adults.** Anything sent to an individual minor should also be copied to their parent or guardian. Keep language professional and formal, just as you would "in person."
- **Communicate with youth during appropriate timeframes.** While it is understandable that sometimes normal operating schedules can be interrupted, it is imperative that proper boundaries are observed when communicating specifically with minors.
- **Be mindful of what students will view and hear from your own surroundings during online meetings/classes.** This includes what is visually shown/seen and heard. Consider how certain spaces may be inappropriate, such as, sitting on a bed to videoconference, or showing an environment with underclothing strewn about, etc.
- **Accept the increased responsibility to intervene if you see or suspect inappropriate content or evidence of abuse.** Youth-serving adults are wonderful for many reasons—one of which is because of how they are vigilant about protection when children are in school or activities. Sometimes this means communicating to child protective services when aware of signs or suspicions of child abuse and neglect. However, when kids are never in school or in public activities during times of stress, there could be more risk because they don't have that additional contact with people who are there to help them—and the red flags of abuse aren't as obvious when someone is behind the screen of technology vs. while in person—however flimsy that screen may be. When interacting with youth online, youth-serving adults, or any caring adult for that matter, must respond appropriately to anything said or observed that may put youth in harm's way (or has already put them there). Imagine the serious consequences that could come from an adult who does not take action after having concerns about a youth's safety.

Additional best practices for *parents and guardians*:

- **Model appropriate behavior.** Everything that you do with technology can be observed by others—this includes how much time you spend on the computer, the balance between Internet time and home life, what you do online and on your

technological devices such as a phone or tablet, how you respond to inappropriate situations you encounter, how you communicate about yourself, the language you use, the images you post, etc. In the case of parents with youth at home, all of it is being observed by developing, impressionable brains.

- **Be available.** First, try as much as possible to be directly engaged in the technology utilized by the child, seeing what they see online, hearing what they hear—asking them questions and processing it together. However, sometimes we temporarily utilize technology with youth while something else is being accomplished—preparing a snack within eyesight, answering a quick work email next to them, etc. Depending on the child's age, if you cannot be immediately and directly engaged in the online interaction or material with the youth, then ensure that you are nearby and ready to communicate if/when necessary.
- **Expect to be included in all communication between the youth-serving adult(s) in your life, and your youth**—then follow up to ensure it happens. Your written permission should be obtained for any youth-serving person/organization to communicate electronically with a minor. Monitor closely any video calls made.
- **Control access.** Communicate to the youth about what sites and apps are acceptable to use; control what apps are actually accessed or purchased, utilize password access and share them with each other, install safety protection software, etc.
- **Limit minor's use of technology.** Schedule technology "down time," since minors (depending on age) could be online all day in classes, or... gaming. Consider limiting digital devices to particular times during the day so it doesn't dominate everyone's day and attention. And, get everyone outside for exercise and fresh perspective!
- **Monitor youth behavior on the devices or apps themselves.** There's no tool you can use that will work as well as personally communicating and reviewing the technology, but it is also helpful to install safety protection software and utilize all of the apps' "parental controls." This could also mean reviewing the apps on the device, creating parallel accounts so that you can interact with and observe your youth on the site, etc. Additionally, enable and regularly monitor privacy settings of apps and devices your child uses. Develop and discuss family internet rules/expectations and how to hold each other accountable. Keep things consistent.
- **Assist minors with understanding what it means to maintain privacy in the digital world—and the importance of it.** This has to do with what youth share about themselves online, intentionally and unintentionally. We take the time to teach them to take a second look before posting anything personal, including what information can be gleaned about them from their surroundings, location, clothing, communication, etc.

- **Instruct "next steps" if inappropriate behavior or material is observed via any of their apps or digital devices**—this could include material that intimidates/bullies, manipulates, harasses or reveals private information. The first step is for the youth to tell a trusted adult—they need to know they can come to you or another adult if they feel uncomfortable or shaken (even if you're in a meeting, or doing something else that is important). The second step is to report. There may be reporting features within the app to report abuse; the [CyberTipline](#) is also an excellent reporting tool.
- **Maintain boundaries even with your friends and family who "aren't in the know,"** and educate them when possible. But, just remember that their behavior isn't dictated by any organization's "social media" or "technology use" policy and despite their good intentions, there could be some issue that crop up. Monitor these interactions as well and plan to monitor, interrupt, educate and then have conversations with youth afterward if something was amiss.