



The outbreak of the highly publicized 2019 Novel (new) Coronavirus (COVID-19) has people concerned around the world, including students, families, and faculty/staff at Divine Mercy Catholic School and Bethlehem Academy. The safety of our community members is always a top priority.

We do plan to resume school on Monday, March 16.

We are writing to inform you of the proactive measures being taken by our schools, how you can help at home, what to do if your student contracts COVID-19, our school's preparation and response plan, as well as a list of helpful resources. As a faith community we consistently turn to prayer. Especially during this Lenten Season, we ask for God's blessing and love as we navigate the challenges of our time.

Our School Preparation and Response Plan

Proactive Measures Being Taken by DMCS and BA

Daily Cleaning of Facility: As a general practice, our cleaning service cleans our facilities and classrooms daily. Recently, we've increased the disinfecting of doorways, handrails, doorknobs, and other surfaces touched by students.

Working to Stop the Spread of Germs: Students will be receiving information on the importance of good hand washing hygiene and how to help stop the spread of germs, which is always best practice. We'll also be reminding students to avoid touching their eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands. Additionally, we will be providing more opportunities to wash hands (after recess, after lunch) during the school day and we will be encouraging social distancing practices.

Monitoring reliable sources of information: We are monitoring and reviewing relevant information to be able to make decisions in a timely fashion. This includes participation in group phone calls with the Minnesota Department of Health (MDH) that is designed specifically for school leaders and health office staff and following the recommendations made today by Governor Walz.

Review of Events, Gatherings, and School-Sponsored Field Trips: At this time, all plans for any events or gatherings hosted by Divine Mercy and Bethlehem Academy are being evaluated based on the guidelines provided by the Minnesota Department of Health (MDH). We will continue to monitor new information and make decisions accordingly.

- School will proceed as normal beginning Monday, March 16th.
- The 10th & 11th grade retreat scheduled for Thursday, March 19 is postponed
- The DMCS Scholarship Dinner scheduled for March 20 is postponed.
- There will be no Bethlehem Academy games and scrimmages for baseball, fastpitch softball, track and golf until at least April 6. Teams will practice as usual.
- Field trips will be approved on an individual basis as information becomes more available.

Ongoing Communication: We will continue to update our families, students, and faculty/staff via email and phone in the coming weeks and months as the situation evolves.

Team of Advisors: School leadership will continue to consult as the situation evolves and decisions need to be made. Our team of advisors includes leadership from each school, our school nurse and parish leaders. In addition, the Archdiocese of St. Paul and Minneapolis is providing support and resources.

What Parents/Guardians and Staff Can Do to Help

Help Stop the Spread of Germs: As with any infectious illness, we encourage you and your family to try to avoid close contact with people who are sick, cover your cough, avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth, and wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds.

Stay Home If Sick: As always, DMCS & BA recommends that people stay home when sick. These recommendations are especially important during cold and flu season. This not only protects the individual, but others who may come in contact with them. As usual, parents are asked to call the office if your children will be absent from school. Please indicate if your student has flu-like symptoms, including a fever. If you feel your child has an underlying condition that puts them in the high-risk category, please reach out to us. We will help support you during this time.

Travel Guidelines: So we can appropriately monitor the potential impacts of this evolving virus, please let the school office know if you have upcoming international travel plans. In general, ensure you review and follow the guidelines that have been published by the CDC. Please pay special attention to CDC protocols for those who have visited a "High Risk Country." **It is important to be aware that if you or your student(s) has traveled in the past 14 days to High Risk Countries, you must notify the school office immediately and NOT return to school pending further instruction.** This directive is regardless of whether you or anyone in your household is experiencing symptoms. If you traveled over spring break, please monitor health daily (take temperature readings twice a day and note any other health concerns).

Avoid sharing food, utensils, glasses, water bottles, lip balm, and other things that could pass viruses.

Learn more about the virus from reliable sources: Read about COVID-19 symptoms on the MDH website listed below and review information being provided by the CDC.

If a DMCS or BA Student, Visitor, or Faculty/Staff Member Has a Confirmed Case of COVID-19

- Contact the school office immediately.
- The school office will contact MDH in the event of an exposure and take appropriate action based on guidelines, direction provided, and best practice. This may include cancelling school for a period of time.
- We will communicate with you as appropriate to provide general information and guidance. Our practice would be to not release the name of anyone who has a confirmed case.

DMCS and BA Response Plans

- If we receive notification that a student, faculty/staff member, or visitor has a confirmed case of COVID-19, upon consultation with the Archdiocese and MDH, the school will most likely cancel school immediately. The length of time will be determined based on when the case was confirmed and advice received from the MDH.
- Athletics and extra-curricular activities would be cancelled during this same time period.
- Provisions will be made for continued learning while school is closed, similar to our flexible learning days held in a snow day situation. DMCS teachers will communicate opportunities and plans via email. BA teachers will post content in PowerSchool Classroom as well as send emails.
- We will communicate decisions with families via phone or email - as we do in any situation that alters the regular school day (ie severe weather, etc.).
- We advise all students and faculty/staff to bring laptops (if applicable), and any necessary work-related items home with them each night to make sure they have what is necessary should a closure take place.

We will continue to monitor information that is provided to us by the Minnesota Department of Health (MDH) and the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), as well as other governmental agencies as appropriate. Additionally, I've included a list of helpful resources below. Please reach out to me if you have questions.

Resources:

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/schools-childcare/index.html>

Minnesota Department of Health: <https://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/schools.html>

Parent/Caregiver Guide: https://www.nctsn.org/sites/default/files/resources/fact-sheet/outbreak_fact-sheet_1.pdf