

# MERCY ACADEMY

2020-2021 School Year







Welcome back, Mercy families!

After many weeks of preparation, we are excited to announce Mercy Academy's reopening plan for the 2020-21 school year! Through ongoing dialogue with parents, students, teachers and local health professionals, we are excited to offer your student the most comprehensive education available.

Our Catholic faith provides much comfort and support during such unprecedented times. In circumstances such as these, we recall Foundress Catherine McAuley's quote, "We have one solid comfort amidst this little tripping about, our hearts can always be in the same place, centered in God...for whom alone we go forward or stay back."

We understand that everyone has unique circumstances that may lead to unique questions. We hope this information helps answer as many of those questions as possible, so you and your family feel at ease. Please know that we are diligently working every day to ensure the safest return to school, while following the guidance of state and local health and education professionals.

The following pages detail our safety plan so your student can happily and safely re-enter Mercy. Because of our longstanding experience with online education, we are able to confidently excel under any circumstances that may arise. We remain committed to providing an excellent curriculum that is both rigorous and innovative. We plan to re-evaluate our approach every academic quarter to ensure that we are maximizing our students' experience while still keeping everyone safe and healthy.

Mercy Academy is prepared to operate under one of three models at any given time: 100% of students on campus, 50% of students on campus, 100% of students online. It is our intention to begin this school year at 50% capacity, while providing any family who may wish for their student to receive a fully online education the option to do so. In this model, 50% of students will receive in-person instruction, while the other 50% live stream the lesson in real time from home. Virtual learners will receive the full classroom experience through Mercy's investment of a quarter of a million dollars in state-of-the-art classroom technology.

Bringing students back to campus at a reduced capacity has multiple benefits:

- Opportunity to maximize safety, learning and well-being of all students, faculty and staff
- Ability to learn new procedures in the supportive Mercy atmosphere our students know and love
- Closer relationships with teachers and students in a nurturing environment
- Routines that provide students with the daily structure they need
- Smaller class sizes that allow 6 feet between learners providing opportunities for mask breaks
- Individualized access to both personal support and academic success counselors to encourage social and emotional health
- Ability to maximize special experiences and traditions that nurture faith development
- Intentional community building activities that allow students to have fun while still operating in a safe and healthy manner

Mercy Academy is an independent private, Catholic school with exceptional resources and a spacious modern campus. We are able to make decisions that may differ from public and other private institutions. The health of our students, their families, faculty and staff is always our top priority. Because of our extensive experience with online learning over the past seven years, along with our nationally recognized curriculum, we know that we can accommodate any scenario that comes our way.

We cannot wait to welcome our students back home to Mercy in just a few short weeks.

# Models of Learning

## Full Capacity: 100% of Students On Campus

- **Model Overview:** All students are able to learn in Mercy's building, while those who prefer to participate in online learning may do so.
- **Instruction:** Teachers instruct students in person. Those who request to learn online can live-stream through Zoom from 8:00 a.m. - 2:55 p.m. every day. Students at home will attend all classes just like they would if they were in the building. Attendance will be taken at the beginning of each block including study block.
- **Healthy at Mercy:** All health standards, including temperature and wellness checks, masks/face shields, social distancing, sanitation, restructured arrival and dismissal times, etc., will be followed. (Details in the following pages) Counselors, teachers and other support staff are fully available to students learning in the building or from home.

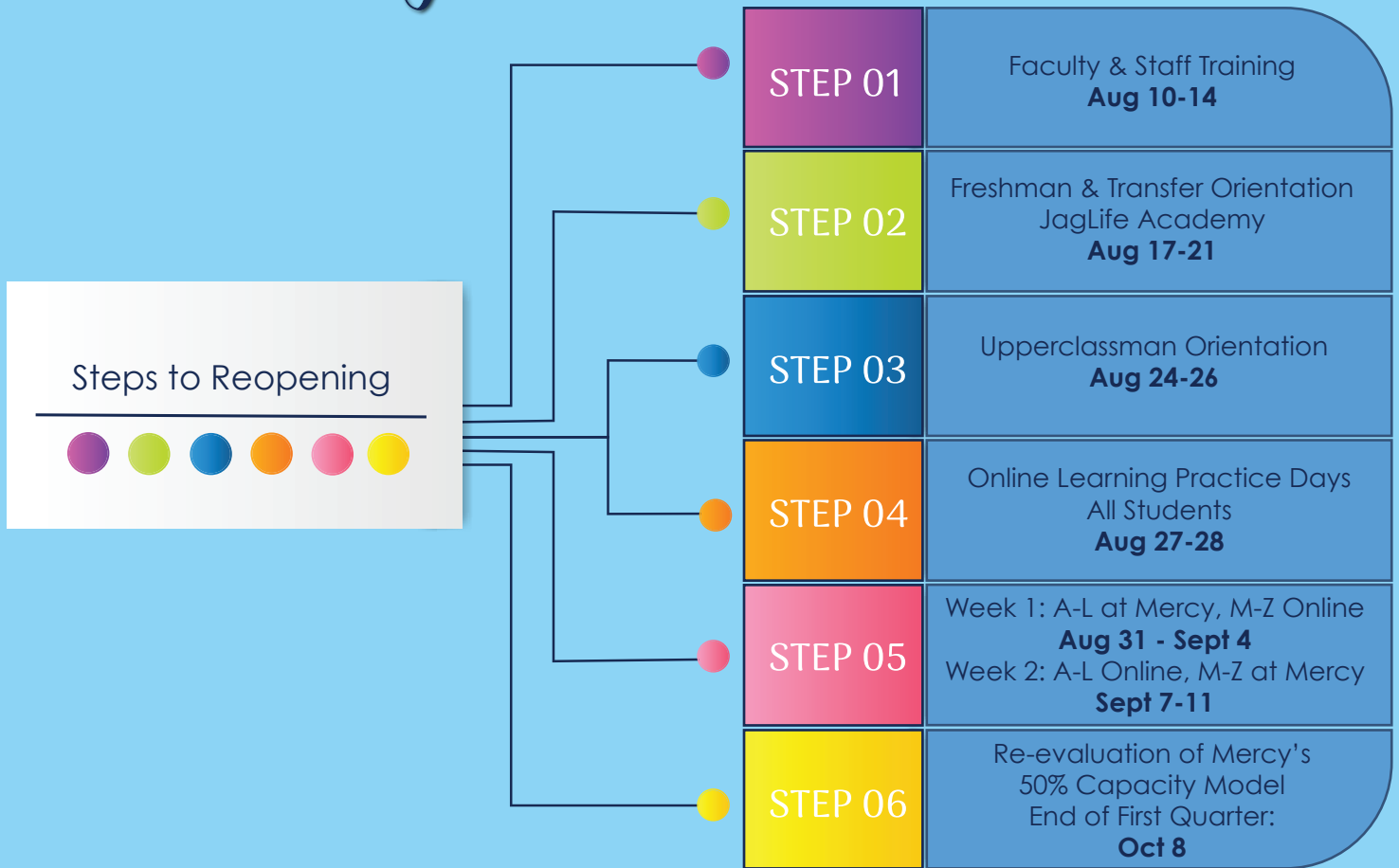
## Reduced Capacity: 50% of Students On Campus

- **Model Overview:** Students learn at Mercy one week and then learn at home the following week. This allows 50% of students in the building at one time, thus reducing class sizes. Students will be split by their last names: A-L one week and M-Z the next. Those who prefer to participate only online are permitted to live stream into their classes every week. Exceptions to the assigned schedule will be considered on an individual basis.
- **Instruction:** Teachers instruct in person while simultaneously live streaming with students through Zoom from 8:00 a.m. - 2:55 p.m. every day. Students at home are expected to attend all classes like they would if they were in the building. Attendance will be taken at the beginning of each block including study block.
- **Healthy at Mercy:** All health standards, including temperature and wellness checks, masks/face shields, social distancing, sanitation, restructured arrival and dismissal times, etc., will be followed. (Details in the following pages) Counselors, teachers and other support staff are fully available to students learning in the building or from home.

## Fully Online: 100% of Students Online

- **No students are permitted in Mercy's building.** Students stream into their classes online from home.
- **Instruction:** Teachers instruct via Zoom from 8:00 a.m. - 2:55 p.m. Students are expected to attend all classes like they would if they were in the building. Attendance will be taken at the beginning of each block including study block.
- **Healthy at Mercy:** Counselors, teachers and other support staff are fully available to students. Appointments are made over email.

# Training to Ensure Success



## Faculty & Staff Training

All faculty and staff will receive extensive training on how to use our newest technology to ensure success for online learning from **August 10-14**.

Teachers receive training on research-based practices for extended online learning, including the newest digital tools, strategies for student engagement and innovative assessments.

Additionally, extensive professional development programming has been created for supporting the emotional needs of students, preparing them for sudden learning changes, and providing them with further digital learning strategies.



## Orientation

**Freshmen** will attend an orientation entitled JagLife Academy from **August 17-21**. Each student will receive information on which days and times she will be on campus, based on her last name.

**Upperclassman** orientation is **August 24-26**. Sophomores will be on campus August 24, juniors on August 25 and seniors on August 26. Students with last names A-L will be on campus from 8:00-11:00 a.m. Students with last names M-Z will be on campus 12:00-3:00 p.m.

**Transfer students** will receive information from Ms. Carnall, Director of Admissions, regarding which days and times they will be asked to attend.

If your student elects to be fully online and is not comfortable coming into the building for orientation, Mercy will coordinate a way to ensure she receives all the necessary information.



Please help stop the spread of COVID-19. If you have a fever or chills with a temperature of 100.4° F or greater, cough, shortness of breath or difficulty breathing, fatigue, muscle or body aches, headache, new loss of taste or smell, a sore throat, congestion or runny nose, nausea, vomiting or diarrhea, please stay home.

## Temperature Checks

Mercy will assign staggered points of entry to decrease congestion for mandatory temperature checks every morning.

**Those with temperatures of 100.4° F or higher may not enter.**

Bus riders will have their temperature checked prior to boarding the bus and will have a separate entrance to the building upon arrival.



## Masks/Face Shields

Students, faculty and staff should expect to wear a mask or face shield.

**Each student, faculty and staff member will be provided with one free Mercy mask.**

Mercy gaiters will be available for purchase.

**Any solid-colored or Mercy plaid mask with no writing is permitted to be worn, as long as it covers the nose and mouth.**

Please wash or wear a new mask every day.

Take this time to find a mask/face covering that is comfortable for your student.



## Contact Tracing

Mercy will comply with all of the Louisville Metro Health Department of Public Wellness' guidelines on contact tracing. Due to privacy policies, we will not release specific names. However, **your family will be notified if your student is believed to have had contact with the affected individual(s).**

## Social Distancing

All seating is 6 feet apart when possible. Floors and seating areas will be properly marked.

**Mercy is blessed to have a beautiful and inclusive 24-acre campus. We plan to utilize every bit of it this year! This includes, three outdoor athletic fields, outdoor classrooms, two gymnasiums, theatre, dance studio and more.**

While creating student schedules, our administration is working to have no more than 12 students per class, allowing 6 feet of space to be positioned between all desks and work spaces.

No physical touch is permitted.

## Sanitation & Cleaning

All staff, faculty and students will do their part to ensure our facilities are properly sanitized throughout the day and in the evening.

Upon arrival to classes, students will receive hand sanitizer and a sanitation wipe to clean their workspace.

Hand sanitation stations will be positioned throughout the building.

After students change classes, all high-use shared items, like handrails, light switches and elevator buttons, will be cleaned.

Our Operations Department has secured a professional cleaning company to come in each night and thoroughly sanitize our building. All classrooms, work surfaces, cafeteria tables, equipment, etc. will receive proper cleaning.

Additionally, athletic coaches and club moderators clean all touched equipment at the end of each practice or meeting.

## Lunches

Lunch block will be extended to permit proper sanitation between each lunch. All tables, chairs and high-touch surfaces will be cleaned and sanitized during this time.

To ensure social distancing, the cafeteria, small gym and our newly expanded outdoor eating space will be used for lunches.

Students are able to purchase lunches, and our cafeteria staff will scan barcodes on student IDs during check-out. More grab-and-go options will be available, and microwaves may be used. Our cafeteria is in compliance with the Louisville Metro Department of Public Health and Wellness.

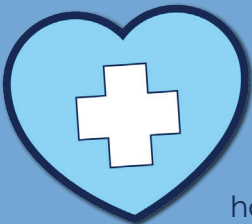
Because there is an additional 30 minutes built into the schedule, all students will receive a 30-minute wellness break to receive support and relieve stress during this block.

## Assemblies & Gatherings

***We will continue to follow the regulations in place by the state and Archdiocese when conducting gatherings.***

Faith and tradition are some of the most important and cherished aspects of being at Mercy. We are very proud of how we were able to creatively transition our special traditions to virtual ceremonies in the spring. We are committed to continuously adapt so

special moments of this kind still take place for our students. When possible, we will hold events in person. When it is not possible, we will find creative ways to still hold them for our students and their families.



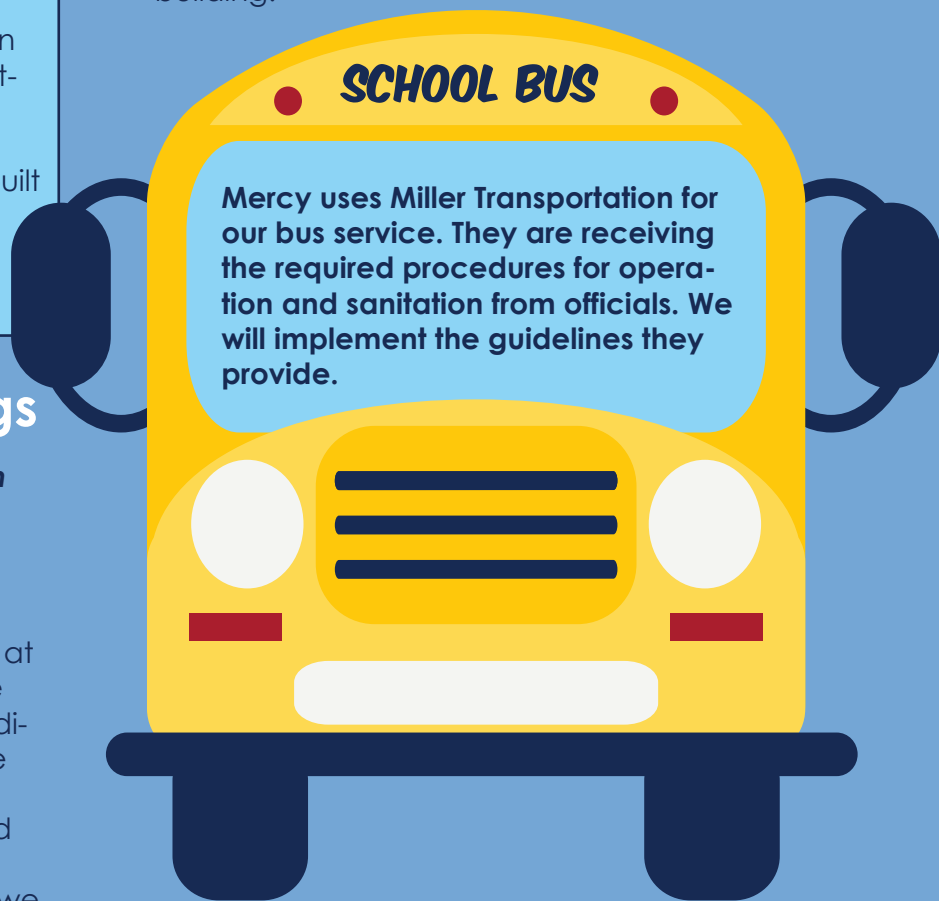
## Lockers

Lockers will not be used this year. Students are permitted to carry their belongings with them to classes as long as they can hang from the hook under their desks. Students should bring only items needed that day.

## Developing Symptoms at School

Even with all the guidelines in place, we understand it is possible to develop symptoms during the school day. Students who begin to feel sick should see Mrs. Hester in the Atrium Office. She has proper personal protective equipment to interact with students, and will contact parents or guardians when pick-up is necessary.

Our chapel will be used as a waiting area. It is spacious and has a door that leads directly out of the building.



## School Day Procedures

***Only essential visitors will be scheduled to meet on campus. No forgotten items are permitted to be dropped off at school except for medication.*** Mercy has extra iPads, lanyards, uniform pieces, masks, etc. for your student to use in the event that she leaves something at home.

There are also new procedures in place for when your student arrives late or needs to leave early for an appointment. Please stay tuned for these changes in our upcoming updates.



## Arrival Times & Policies

Mercy will still open our doors at 7:00 a.m. ***Students who arrive between 7:00-7:15 a.m., must use Door 13 (the door at the start of morning drop-off).*** Temperatures will be checked and students will proceed to the cafeteria or small gym which will have social distance markings in place.

At 7:15 a.m., a second door in our carpool line, Door 15 (under the blue awning), will open. ***Students may enter Door 13 or 15 between 7:15-8:00 a.m.*** Temperatures will be checked and those who arrive before the 7:45 a.m. bell will go to the cafeteria or small gym.

At 7:45 a.m., there will be a staggered release to first block classrooms.

***Please adjust your morning arrival routine to ensure there is time for your student to get her temperature checked and make it to her first block class before 8:00 a.m.***

## Switching Classes

Students have 5 minutes to switch between each of their classes. If we find we need more time, due to social distancing practices, we will happily adjust the schedule.

***Students will be dismissed one row at a time and must always walk on the right side of the hallway. Floors will be marked so they know how to allow for 6 feet of distance from others.***

While it is likely that she will already be wearing her mask, it is important to remember that any time a student moves, she must wear a mask.

## Attendance

Teachers will take attendance at the start of every block. Those who participate in classes online must be logged into the Zoom meetings by the start of the block (schedules including start and end time of classes will be sent at a later date).

***Those who elect to be 100% online must have sufficient internet bandwidth in order to connect to their classes in a timely fashion. Please consider your internet provider if you are selecting this option.***

## Staggered Dismissal Times

***Mercy will implement a staggered dismissal for all students between 2:40-2:55 p.m. Students will be dismissed by grade level (Senior, Junior, Sophomore, Freshman).***

Once they are called to exit, they must immediately gather their belongings and exit the building to their vehicles. No gatherings in the hallways or parking lot will be permitted.

If a student's ride is not yet at Mercy, she may wait in the cafeteria or small gym and use the socially-distanced seating in place.

If a student has a club, sport or meeting with a teacher, she must wait in the cafeteria or small gym until the time of that meeting.

## Extracurriculars & Athletics

KHSAA is closely monitoring athletics. We will follow their guidelines for appropriate athletic practices and events.

All clubs and extracurricular activities can still take place. Moderators will determine the safest way to proceed. Some may take place over Zoom, while others may take place in person.

All guidelines Mercy has in place for the school day must be followed for extracurriculars, activities and athletics.

## Online Learning

Online learners will receive live classroom experiences with their teachers and classmates. ***They are expected to have their video on so teachers and classmates can interact with them.***

They will have 5 minutes between each class to sign off and log into their next classroom Zoom meeting.

***We ask that all students participating in online learning wear Mercy spirit wear.*** They are not expected to be in uniform, but they are expected to follow out-of-uniform guidelines detailed in our student handbook.

***If your student plans to participate in online learning 100% of the time, we ask for you to fill out the "Online Only Request" form on our website by Friday, August 7.***

# Important Notes on COVID-19 Testing & Self-Quarantining

Mercy Academy will not administer COVID-19 testing. If a student, faculty or staff member is experiencing symptoms, he or she is asked to stay home and to see a physician. The physician will make the decision on whether or not to administer a COVID-19 test.

Mercy's handbook details our sick policy: after three days of absence, due to an illness, a doctor's note must be presented to the school office upon the student's return to school.

All testing and self-quarantining will come from the direction of the Louisville Metro Department of Health and Wellness, the Kentucky Public Health Department and physicians.

In order for everyone to remain healthy at Mercy, we ask all families to do their part. If a student, teacher, staff member or someone in his or her household receives a COVID-19 test, please do not return to school if the test is pending. An individual should not return until the test comes back negative.

If someone in your household has a positive test, but not your student, she must remain home and self-quarantine. With our real-time streaming option, we assure you that she will not miss a moment of instruction, nor will her absences count against her. If a teacher tests positive or has a family member who tests positive, he or she must follow the same protocols as students. If the teacher is feeling well enough to teach, he or she may do so over Zoom while a substitute teacher monitors the classroom.

At this time, Governor Beshear has asked Kentucky residents not to travel to states with a 15% or higher positive COVID-19 rate. If your family does travel to these states within 14 days of school opening, we ask your student to participate in online learning from home while self-quarantining.

We understand there are many things to consider when deciding to send your student to school. Mercy Academy will do everything in our power to protect our students and keep them happy and healthy. We hope you will feel comfortable knowing that your family has a choice on whether or not to your student returns to campus.

Our Healthy at Mercy Taskforce team will constantly monitor the absences of sick students. They are equipped to make the decision of when we should shift to one of the other models.

Thank you for your patience as we navigate through uncertain times. We look forward to a great new school year ahead! If you have any questions, please contact the school office at (502) 671-2010.

