

July 20, 2020

Dear St. John's Lutheran School families:

Grace, mercy and peace to you all!

The COVID-19 pandemic has affected every area of life here in Southern California. Throughout most of the spring and early summer, the hope was that school in the fall would return life to some bit of normal. With the governor's announcement Friday, that hope faded. It is the intention of St. John's Lutheran School to do everything possible to have school face-to-face.

Although the statewide school guidance was directed for all private, parochial, and public schools, there is an avenue that is open to us pursuing before we make the final decision to have school 100% online. The California Department of Public Health set out guidelines (<https://www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/CID/DCDC/CDPH%20Document%20Library/COVID-19/Schools%20Reopening%20Recommendations.pdf>) for schools after Governor Newsom's announcement. The guidelines allow for a waiver to be requested by elementary schools to continue to operate face-to-face even if the county is not off of the state monitoring list. The waiver requirement reads:

*A waiver of this criteria may be granted by the local health officer for elementary schools to open for in-person instruction. A waiver may only be granted if one is requested by the superintendent (or equivalent for charter or private schools), in consultation with labor, parent and community organizations. Local health officers must review local community epidemiological data, consider other public health interventions, and consult with CDPH when considering a waiver request.*

St. John's, along with our legal counsel, is pursuing this waiver request. It is unknown how long it will take for a decision to be made about this, or if it will be successful. We do need your help to try and make it successful.

**Parents who feel comfortable doing so are encouraged to reach out to Orange County Supervisor Don Wagner with emails, phone calls, and social media to kindly advocate for St. John's waiver to be granted. The more voices the county hears from St. John's, the better. A sample email or phone call/voicemail script has been provided. Contact information for Supervisor Wagner is also provided below.**

In the event that the waiver is granted, St. John's will proceed with a dual enrollment option: 100% online for those who choose for 1 quarter of school at a time, AND 100% face-to-face for those who choose. Nearly 27% of parents surveyed indicated that they want an online only option for a quarter at a time and St. John's is committed to providing that option for families. St. John's will have to follow all other state guidelines, most notably, that all students 3<sup>rd</sup> grade and up will be required to wear a face covering and those in K-2<sup>nd</sup> grade will be family choice.



However, St. John's is poised to purchase comfortable face shields for every child, so that every child who must or wants to wear a face covering can do so while seeing each other's beautiful faces!

In the event that a waiver is not granted, and Orange County does not meet the required state thresholds by August 4 (2 weeks before the start of school), St. John's has no choice, but to comply with the state mandate and offer only online school until the county meets the state criteria for 2 weeks. At that point, we would fully open up for face-to-face, plus still offer the online option for those families that want it.

Online learning at St. John's is critically important, not just for those families who choose to learn online now, but for the future of learning past the pandemic. The school wants to reach as many children for Christ as possible with an exceptional education, which is why we are investing more in our online platforms and pedagogies. When the pandemic is over (which we pray daily that it is sooner than later), we plan to continue to offer an online experience for families anywhere in the world to experience the love of Christ and the joy of being a part of the St. John's family.

St. John's has heard the various voices from the past spring about successes, concerns and criticisms of the emergency online learning that we went into on March 16. We have revamped our online philosophy and will provide families with an unmatched online learning experience, whether we all must be online or whether a family chooses it.

Here are a few highlights of the online learning for the fall (may be subject to slight changes).

1. Daily live teaching (2-3 Zooms a day)
2. Daily live attendance check-ins (school day starts at 9 am)
3. Robust learning platforms (Seesaw K-4 and Google Classroom 5-8)
4. Digital AND paper materials (we will send all books, workbooks, and other tactile materials home before school starts)
5. A school-provided iPad for every single student
6. A digital only homework (turning in work) experience
7. An online homeroom teacher as well as online coordinators to help facilitate an exceptional online experience
8. Art lessons and PE challenges weekly (live and/or asynchronously)
9. Spanish, Library story time, and Music biweekly (live and/or asynchronously)
10. Electives for middle schoolers (optional and asynchronous only)
- 11. Last but not least...the LOVE of Jesus from our exceptional, Christian and highly trained teachers! You can't get this anywhere else!**

As you can see online learning at St. John's will be robust and worth your tuition dollars. For the 27% of you who chose that on the survey, we are excited to continue your St. John's experience online. If you are ready to make that decision, you can sign up for *Mustangs Online* (St. John's



online learning program) by going to this link: <https://forms.gle/uS2N1fazLnWaKBvx9>. Last day to sign up for *Mustangs Online* for the first quarter will be July 28, 2020. **St. John's will also help to facilitate at-home learning pods.** Whether we are all online or just those that chose, families are recognizing the need to socialize their children and get help with childcare needs. Once we know our direction (waiver outcome), we will put forth efforts to connect families who desire a "learning pod" with others, so that we can continue to be connected as a St. John's family.

Below is the contact information and sample letter for Supervisor Wagner. I prayerfully ask those of you willing to reach out to him do so on our behalf. May God continue to richly bless you and your family!

Faith over fear!

Jake Hollatz, Ed.D.

**Principal**

St. John's Lutheran School  
714.288.4406

- Delivering the Restorative Hope of Jesus • Courageous Faith • Inspired Learners

*"What, then, shall we say in response to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us?"*  
Romans 8:31

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Donald P. Wagner

Supervisor, Third District

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Sample correspondence:

*Dear supervisor Wagner:*



*I am a parent at St. John's Lutheran School in Old Towne Orange. St. John's recently submitted a waiver for elementary schools to open up face-to-face for the 2020-2021 academic year. My family must have school open face-to-face for the wellbeing of my child and the necessity of our family. I am a working parent and need to send my child to school so that I can earn a living and participate in the Orange County economy.*

*St. John's has been a part of my child's life for XX years and see face-to-face learning as far superior to online options for my child. I have read St. John's health, safety and reopening planning document as well as the school protocols for COVID and am confident that they are keeping children and adults safe.*

*As a family in Orange County, I value private, Christian education because it provides my family with the foundational values necessary for life. If St. John's is not granted a waiver to open face-to-face, I am afraid that the school may suffer a significant loss in tuition revenue and the 138-year-old school may have to reduce it's work force. This would be a significant blow for my child, family and the employees.*

*Please work closely with Dr. Chau to carefully review St. John's waiver and give it the full recourse due your office. We believe that St. John's is a safe and exceptional school for my child and it has proven that it can be open during this pandemic face-to-face while still following all CDPH guidelines and keeping children and my family safe.*

*Sincerely,*

XXXX XXXX

