



August, 7, 2020

Dear Great Oaks Academy Families,

We are grateful that so many families have supported our new school by enrolling early, sharing our vision for a classical school in the South Metro, and staying engaged with us while navigating the uncertainty of these times. By now, platitudes about the uncertainties caused by COVID-19 are well-worn. Things will look different this school year, but Great Oaks Academy leadership has worked diligently to create a safe opening plan that complies with the parameters determined by the Minnesota Department of Health (MDH) and the Minnesota Department of Education (MDE), and prioritizes the health and well-being of students and staff, while also endeavoring to provide the highest quality classical education.

The three Learning Scenarios set forward by the MDE are dependent upon the County case rate for COVID-19. These are available for review [here](#). At the time of publication of this document, the current number of cases per 10,000 in Dakota county is within the range that allows for Scenario 1, In-Person Learning with physical distance, symptom monitoring, and safety protocols in place.

Because the number of cases has steadily increased in the last few weeks, and wishing to avoid any disruption that may occur when transitioning between models, **Great Oaks Academy leadership has chosen to begin the 2020-2021 school year in a modified Scenario 1, with shortened In-Person learning days, Monday through Friday.** This will allow the Academy to remain in an educationally stable format for as long as possible, even if the model must shift to Scenario 2, Hybrid learning. Find a detailed explanation of our plan [here](#).

In this scenario, **Great Oaks Academy will facilitate half-day, in-person learning that follows MDH physical distance protocols from 8:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m., Monday through Friday.** The remainder of the school day, from 1:30 p.m. to 3:00 p.m. may incorporate extended learning that builds upon in-class instruction. Breakfast and lunch will be provided. We are negotiating bus transportation for Farmington residents and will communicate this schedule when the bus company finalizes their plans. Staff and students (age 6+) physically present in the school building will be required to wear an approved face covering (cloth, disposable, or a face shield) per Governor Walz's Executive Order 20-81 (see exemptions [here](#)).

We understand that many families may be apprehensive about students returning to school in person. Families may opt-out of in-person or hybrid learning, due to any medical or safety concerns. Great Oaks Academy will provide an "equitable distance learning model" to all such families that prefer a distance learning format.



The nature of the Minnesota Safe Opening Plan means that decision-making and school format remain fluid and open to change depending upon the COVID-19 case numbers for Dakota County. Great Oaks Academy leadership will monitor the number of COVID-19 cases every two weeks, and may need to modify or change the scenario per guidance from our Regional Support Team or MDE. In the event of any changes, Great Oaks Academy will provide clear communication to our families via email, our social media accounts, and our website.

These are challenging times, but our fortitude and commitment to the Academy's vision is strong. Whatever changes we endure this year, the vision of Great Oaks Academy for classical education that is rigorous, literature-rich, and wondrous is more enduring. We do what we must now, and joyfully with gratitude for the fact that we can still open our doors and serve high quality learning, knowing that these things are an investment in the future of our students and community.

Sincerely,

Director Paul McGlynn & the Great Oaks Academy Board of Directors:

Mr. Heith Wetzler, Chair  
Mr. Rich Penix, Vice Chair  
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