

Dear OLW Families:

This has been a very busy week as planning continues for the start of the school year. As you can imagine, there are many things to do this year that fall outside of the traditional planning my staff and I would normally be doing for the start of school. I appreciate everyone's patience during this time. I know that many of you are feeling anxious about the start of the school year and have many, many questions. Today's email contains a more comprehensive slide deck of procedures for the school opening. **PLEASE read it very CAREFULLY.** Some slides are completely new and others have new information in bold print.

There are many things to share, but the most important is that after careful thought and prayer, I have determined that it is in the best interest of the students and teachers to delay the start of the school year by a few days. **Our new first day of school will now be Friday, August 21st.** This will be a half day of school. Monday, August 24th will also be a half day of school. We will begin full days on Tuesday, August 25th.

By contract the first official day back for teachers is August 13th, although many teachers have already begun coming in to meet with me and set up their classrooms. Normally two days of professional development is enough time to meet and organize for the year, but with all of the new safety procedures and routines to establish, two days is just not adequate time to get everything done. Opening safely is our number one priority and delaying our opening a couple of days will better position us to do that.

I understand that changing the start date may be a hardship to some families. Please know that I did not make this decision lightly.

One of the most common questions I have received this week is why OLW is not considering a hybrid model for our opening. It is important to understand that many decisions are being made on an Archdiocesan level. This is one of those decisions. At this time, all Catholic schools in the Archdiocese of Chicago are asked to plan for in person instruction and remote learning for families that choose to keep students home at the start of the school year. OLW is working on a remote learning plan based on the feedback from last week's survey. As of August 1st, the 222 families that responded indicated the following intent:

157 Families - Definitely In Person - 70.72%
45 Families - Leaning Towards In Person - 20.27%
14 Families - Leaning Toward Remote - 6.31%
6 Families - Definitely Remote - 2.7%

While it is understandable that some families' positions may change between now and the start of school, this data is currently driving our remote learning plans for those that are planning not to start the year in person.

While the option of using a third party (Catapult Learning) is still an option for families, comments from the survey showed that our families would prefer a remote learning program

managed by OLW staff. We are working diligently to come up with additional options for families interested in starting the year remotely. However, with so many families expressing interest in in person instruction, determining how to reposition staff to provide remote learning has been a challenge. While our teachers are very dedicated and work very hard, I do not want to over task them with too many additional responsibilities. I know that the lack of information about the third party program and even our own plans is concerning, but I can promise you we are working as hard as we can to come up with reasonable options. In a meeting today, the Office of Catholic Schools assured principals we would have more information about Catapult Learning early next week.

This week our school has also faced a few staffing challenges. Two of our new teachers, Miss Tracy and Mrs. Darland both resigned this week for personal reasons. My prayers go out to both of them as they are both dealing with significant changes with their families. Thankfully, two wonderful candidates were interviewed today. A new teacher, Kristin Sweeney, has already been hired for first grade. Miss Sweeney is coming to us with two years of teaching experience. An offer has also been made to a new kindergarten teacher, and I should hear back by Monday. A new teacher has also been hired to replace Ms. Chambers. Michaela Skweres, a graduate of the University of Illinois, will be teaching 5th grade. Mrs. Boeche will be joining the middle school team this year as a 6th grade homeroom teacher, as well as teaching 6th grade ELA and 7th grade social studies.

As you have questions, please use the designated email to send them. Grouping questions together via the reopeningquestions@olwschool.org has been the most manageable approach so. I ask for your continued prayers and understanding in the coming days as there is still much to be done!

While I have been busy this summer, I find joy in the thought of having all of your children in our building soon! They have been away far too long. This year will be very different, and I expect that we will face many challenges along the way, but I have so much faith in this community to come together and do what needs to be done to reopen our school safely and keep not only your individual families safe but our OLW school family safe as well.

[Reopening With Trust - 8_7_2020 \(2\).pdf](#)

Our Lady of the Wayside....Pray for Us!
Respectfully yours,
Mr. David Wood