

MERCY BACK-TO-SCHOOL PLAN FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS



What advantages does Mercy and its HyFlex Learning Model have compared to other academic institutions?

In the present context, wherein schools are developing hybrid models, our plan capitalizes on our experience with synchronous learning and our ability to provide live video conferencing to those students who learn from home. It is not our common practice to send packets for girls to complete independently in place of real-time instruction. More than this, however, are the traits that have set Mercy apart every year for the past 92 years: our traditions, culture, values, and mission. We are devoted to teaching our girls to be pioneers of change whose skills, knowledge, and faith are put toward making the world a better place. We have purposefully provided time within our academic calendar to ensure we do not lose the heart of Mercy.

Keep in mind, because of Mercy's all-girls environment, our students are comfortable in class so learning becomes easier. When together, our girls display their intelligence, ask more questions, and encourage each other. We adopt instructional strategies tailored to unique female learning styles. Girls enjoy not just equal opportunity, but every opportunity. All student presenters, performers, writers, singers, athletes, and leaders are girls. In a survey of 4,200 all-girls school graduates, more than 80% reported that they were better prepared to succeed in a co-ed world precisely because they attended an all-girls school. Girls who attend an all-girls school also report higher academic confidence in math and science, and in their presentation abilities.

Our daughter is new to Mercy and did not have the same experience in virtual learning in her previous school. Will she have some training on Mercy's platform?

We will provide a thorough in-person orientation for all students as we adjust to new patterns of daily schooling. All students will engage in instructional technology modules created by our IT team that will thoroughly explain how to use platforms associated with Chromebooks and Surface Pros. Students new to Mercy will have their own orientation on Wednesday, September 2 which will include an introduction to our various online platforms so that they can have a smooth transition into our synchronous learning program.

The plan lists class days as Monday/Tuesday and Thursday/Friday, but the second day of school is listed as September 9 which is a Wednesday. Who comes to school that day?

The first day of school is Tuesday, September 8. The Faith cohort will attend on Tuesday and Wednesday of that week. The Hope cohort will attend on Thursday and Friday of that week. These two introductory days for each cohort will consist of orientation activities, instructional technology modules, safety trainings, school ID photographs, and opportunities to meet with all of their classes and teachers. Later in the year, should a cycle day occur on a Wednesday (such as December 16), all instruction on that day will be remote.

How will cohorts be determined?

We are still working on how we will determine cohorts; there are academic programming and social factors we are considering.

Can cohorts be arranged by grade level? For example, Faith could include grades 9 and 10, while Hope could include grades 11 and 12?

The Instructional Program subcommittee considered this. The problem with this method is that any one section of a class would be divided between two classrooms and the teacher would need to instruct two classrooms at a time. Even if it were manageable from an instructional perspective, we would need to hire about 35 paraprofessionals to supervise half of the class while the primary teacher was working with the other. We expect Wednesdays will be opportunities to develop class cohesion.

Will cohorts be allowed to mingle, such as for class get-togethers?

Community-building is an essential part of a student's success and social and emotional wellness. It is also a critical piece of the Mercy experience. We plan to use Wednesdays for this purpose. We have two committees that are working on developing plans to ensure these types of gatherings can be held whether on campus or virtually. In-person gatherings will be based upon state safety regulations and guidance.

Can we expect a reduction in tuition if our daughter is only in school two days a week?

Regardless of whether your daughter is learning while sitting in a classroom or while sitting in her home, she will receive an education unmatched by so many other institutions. She is a Mercy Girl, lovingly embraced within the historic Circle of Mercy, and part of a 13,000-strong sisterhood that will last her entire lifetime.

Mercy's costs have dramatically increased due to the efforts we are undertaking to keep students and faculty safe. Mercy is blessed to have wonderfully generous donors who help us provide \$1.5 million in scholarships and tuition assistance to 40% of our student population. To help keep costs down for parents, Mercy charges \$2,000 less than our actual expenses to educate each of our students. We appreciate the trust you have placed in us and the wonderful future you are giving your daughter.

When can we expect specific instructions regarding the screening process and daily routines?

We hope to have informational and instructional materials available to families August 24. Students and their parents/guardians may be required to affirm that they have viewed these materials in preparation for the opening of the school year.

If the Mercy middle school is moving to a new location, why can't the high school expand into the middle school space and offer five-day a week instruction?

We are constrained not by the number of classrooms, but by their size. We cannot fit more than 12 or 15 students in our Blossom Road classrooms if we set desks six feet apart. The new space that we are considering for our middle school has larger classrooms and can accommodate class sizes of between 20 and 23 students while maintaining social distance.

If my daughter cannot tolerate wearing a face mask all day, will she be allowed in the building to learn in-person?

Every student or authorized person in the building will be mandated to wear a face mask at all times. If a student cannot tolerate wearing a mask, she is required to learn at home via synchronous instruction. We have installed mobile plexiglass barriers in classrooms so that teachers can remove their masks during whole group instruction.

I'm concerned about my daughter returning to school, even with these precautions in place. Can she continue with remote learning?

All our classes will be capable of providing live video conferencing. We anticipate that in the course of the next several months, Mercy girls may find themselves quarantined for one reason or another and we do not want them to lose any instructional time. This will be true for all our students whether they are in the middle school or high school. If a family decides their daughter should remain home, she will receive Mercy's world-class remote education. We will be requiring parents/guardians to sign off on such arrangements. Please contact the Main Office if your family is considering full-time remote learning.

What is happening with sports and extracurricular activities?

Sports seasons are dictated by Section V, NYSPHSAA, and state regulations. The current NYSPHSAA plan is a start date of September 21, with a backup January start date and three truncated seasons. As for extracurriculars, they are currently on pause, but we expect to introduce them when we are confident that our safety measures are having the effect of suppressing the spread of the coronavirus. Please [click here](#) for updates on the start of the fall sports season, a timeline of important events, and links to the necessary paperwork.

Are there any restrictions regarding travel?

Please be advised that students who travel to restricted regions, including states, must quarantine for 14 days and will not be permitted on campus until those 14 days elapse.

What professional cleaning company will be used to clean the school?

Mercy has hired Rochester-based CleanCraft, a well-respected janitorial company. They boast an extensive commercial portfolio, including Rochester General Hospital and the University of Rochester. Three CleanCraft managers will be overseeing the cleaning and disinfecting of the campus.

Do students wear uniforms at home?

Students will be required to wear a uniform top (polo) while visible on camera. P.E. clothing will also be required for any online class instruction.

Are visitors allowed in the building?

We are not permitting visitors in the building; however, we are still developing plans to safely accommodate U.S. mail, FedEx deliveries, etc. We will not be accepting lunches, forgotten schoolwork, or other personal deliveries for students at the office.

In a previous communication, you mentioned Mercy will offer an Information Session. Can you let us know when that will occur?

Mercy has scheduled an information session for **Thursday, August 20 at 8 a.m.** (login information will be sent to you next week). We will announce additional dates/times if required by the state or needed by our parents. To help Mercy best prepare for the information session on August 20, please [click here](#) to submit any questions you may have.