

# REOPENING MERCY

*Update*



August 13, 2020

Dear Mercy High School community,

Last week, we released “Reopening Mercy, Part 2,” which offered you an overview of our four academic models—*Mercy 3.0*, *Mercy PACE*, *Mercy Hybrid*, and *Mercy 60*. Every approach, in its own way, is **prudent**, **flexible**, and **creative**.

Over the many months since we concluded on-campus instruction last spring, our efforts have been devoted to preparing for the 2020-21 school year. To that end, we have consulted with healthcare professionals, studied the guidance from federal, state, and local officials, participated in numerous meetings of the Archdiocese of Baltimore and the Association of Independent Maryland & DC Schools (AIMS), and remained alert to the external environment. We have carefully readied our facilities and prepared guidelines consistent with the primary goal of keeping our Mercy community safe and healthy. We have invested significantly in professional development, technology, and new staffing to support our Mercy Girls.

We believe that it is most prudent that we begin our year with *Mercy PACE*: excellent online academic instruction provided by our outstanding Mercy faculty, with the gradual introduction of selected on-campus activities that we can easily scale up or down, depending upon the local environment. In doing so, you can be assured that there will be a complete continuity of learning for your Mercy Girl as we begin the school year. We will be carefully watching our external environment, and we will provide an update to you at the end of September.

At this time, we are moving forward with on-campus orientation for each class. It is critical that our Mercy Girls meet their teachers and classmates, see their school, and feel Mercy sisterhood and spirit. We will bring our Mercy Girls back to campus in reduced numbers for orientation. Orientation will serve as an excellent measure of our community’s ability to wear masks, maintain social distancing, and observe other guidelines for long periods of time.

No doubt you will have many questions. The **accompanying letter** from Principal Jeanne Blakeslee further outlines our plans, and as they continually develop, we will communicate those to you.

Nothing is more important than the health and safety of our girls, their families, and our faculty and staff. While we are disappointed that we cannot begin our academic instruction together in person, we have never been more determined to deliver our mission of providing an excellent Catholic college preparatory education to our Mercy Girls. Catherine McAuley, the founder of the Sisters of Mercy, wrote, “A good beginning is of great importance.” Our commitment to you is that we will make the opening of this academic year—and all the year, no matter the mode of instruction—the very best it can be. And we pledge that all of our efforts will be dedicated to helping your Mercy Girl grow and thrive spiritually, academically, and emotionally.

May you and your family enjoy the blessings of health and happiness throughout this most unusual year.

Sincerely,

Mary Beth Lennon '85  
President

Jeanne A. Blakeslee  
Principal

Mary Ella Franz Marion '76, P'09  
Dean of Students



August 13, 2020

Dear Families,

We are so excited to finally see our Mercy Girls in just a few weeks! We have spent a good deal of time this summer ascertaining the best way to proceed as we open campus in the fall. While we are taking a prudent approach to begin academic classes online, we are committed to making the Mercy Magic real by hosting as many activities as we can on campus and in-person as we are able, and to engage in our robust community life in as full a way as possible.

Our faculty is committed to excellence in teaching and learning, and to providing continuous learning for your daughters, whether they are online, in a hybrid model, or fully on campus and in-person. Over the course of the summer, our teachers have attended a range of professional development opportunities, including online learning, cultural competence and social justice, and/or discipline-based creative content. We have attended sessions from the Global Online Academy, the Association of Independent Maryland and DC Schools, the Wells Collective, the Bureau of Education and Research, the Maryland Arts Education Collaborative, the Dance Educators' Training Institute, the American School Counselor Association, and Project Lead the Way Biomedical Science. We have learned about online assessment, community engagement, building robust community while online, ongoing health and wellness, and equity and inclusion in schools.

Mercy will begin the academic year with the *Mercy PACE* model. This promises to be Personal, Active, Creative, and Engaging. While classes will be online, we will do all that we can to host community activities on-campus and in-person, depending upon a number of factors, including health guidelines from local and state authorities. While we are in the Mercy PACE model, we will not be offering Mercy-sponsored transportation. Families who have signed contracts or expressed interest in transportation will receive a separate communication next week with further information.

We will begin the school year with Orientation for our new students transferring from other schools, as well as orientations for each year level.

- On **Monday, August 24, 7:00-8:00 p.m.**, our traditional new parent meeting for parents and guardians of incoming freshman and transfer students will take place via Zoom. More information will be forthcoming.
- Orientation for students transferring from other schools will be held on **Tuesday, August 25**. Families have received information about how this day is organized from the Admissions Office.

- The Class of 2024, our youngest Mercy Girls, will be able to choose from among three days of orientation—**Wednesday, August 26, Thursday, August 27, or Friday, August 28**—to meet their teachers, come to understand the schedule, see one another, and pick up state textbooks and devices. Freshman families will be receiving an invitation from the Admissions Office to choose their orientation day.
- Orientation for sophomores, juniors, and seniors will occur the following week. In each grade level, Mercy Girls will be divided into Groups 1 and 2, and they will attend orientation by group. *These groups are listed on their course schedules, **which can be accessed in the E-Portfolio on PlusPortals.***
- During orientation, students will be able to meet with their advisers and attend each class, meeting each of their teachers and becoming acquainted with the online learning platforms. They will also have a class meeting and prayer service. *Please note that, due to changing circumstances, this schedule is slightly different than previously announced.*
  - **Monday, August 31:** Sophomore Orientation
    - Group 1 meeting: 8:00 a.m.–12:10 p.m.
    - Group 2 meeting: 11:20 a.m.–3:30 p.m.
  - **Tuesday, September 1:** Junior Orientation
    - Group 1 meeting: 8:00 a.m.–12:10 p.m.
    - Group 2 meeting: 11:20 a.m.–3:30 p.m.
  - **Wednesday, September 2:** Senior Orientation
    - Group 1 meeting: 8:00 a.m.–12:10 p.m.
    - Group 2 meeting: 11:20 a.m.–3:30 p.m.
- On **Thursday, September 3**, we will have virtual office hours, so that Mercy Girls have time to check in with their teachers and are clear on how to begin their online classes the following week.
- Online classes will begin on **Tuesday, September 8.**
- All Mercy Girls must attend orientation in full uniform (no blazer or sweater required). Each girl must wear a mask. Masks must be solid red, black, white, or grey. Mercy-themed masks sold through the school store are also acceptable. Masks must be worn at all times, and students will be expected to observe social distancing measures.

In order to attend orientation and other on-campus activities, including classes, this year, families must complete two online documents by **Thursday, August 20**. Please click on the links below to submit your responses:

- Assumption of Risk Form  
[https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/parent\\_assumption\\_of\\_risk](https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/parent_assumption_of_risk)
- Parent Acknowledgement and Agreement Regarding COVID-19 Protocols  
[https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/acknowledge\\_covid19\\_protocols](https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/acknowledge_covid19_protocols)

*These signed documents must be on file in order for students to participate in orientation. Students will not be allowed to enter Mercy High School's buildings if we do not have these documents on file. Thank you for your attention to this critical paperwork.*

Families who are not comfortable sending their Mercy Girls to campus will be accommodated. Please email me at [jblakeslee@mercyhighschool.com](mailto:jblakeslee@mercyhighschool.com) by Thursday, August 20 so that we can make the appropriate accommodations for your daughter. If your family has technical challenges or problems with connectivity, please also let me know as soon as possible.

Prior to coming onto campus, each one of us, Mercy Girls, faculty, and staff, will need to submit a daily health report. There are four questions that all need to answer before we are allowed on campus. These four questions include:

- Daily temperature
- Contact with others
- Travel
- Symptoms

Anyone who has a temperature, has had contact with a person being tested for COVID-19, has travelled to a state with high number of cases within 14 days, or who is exhibiting symptoms of COVID-19 will not be allowed on campus. More information about how to report this information will be forthcoming.

If your family has not returned the Family Information Form, please do so by Thursday, August 20. Without the information on the form, family contacts are not accurate and communication between school and home is impeded.

Click on the links below for:

- [The calendar for August and September](#)
- [Information regarding orientation days for sophomores, juniors, and seniors and the schedule for online office hours on September 3](#)
- [Instructions for accessing the student schedule on PlusPortals via E-Portfolio](#)

As we begin this academic year, we are deeply grateful for your steadfast support. Together, we will work to ensure that your Mercy Girl—whether new to our school community or a returning student—feels our Mercy Magic! In close partnership with you, we have no doubt that despite the unusual circumstances of this year, your Mercy Girl will learn, laugh, pray, and grow. Thank you again for entrusting your daughter to us!

Should you have any questions, please do not hesitate to be in touch with me.

Sincerely,



Jeanne A. Blakeslee  
Principal