

TO: Dr. Clayton Chau, Agency Director/Action County Health Officer, Orange County Health Health Care Agency

FROM: Jacob D. Hollatz, Ed.D, Principal, St. John's Lutheran School

RE: Waiver Petition Requesting Re-Opening of St. John's Lutheran School

DATE: July 20, 2020

On Friday, July 17, Governor Gavin Newsom put forth the *COVID-19 and Reopening In-Person Learning Framework for K-12 Schools in California*. St. John's Lutheran School is an elementary school located in Old Towne Orange, California. St. John's Lutheran School has continuously operated in Orange since 1883, serving families with a high-quality education.

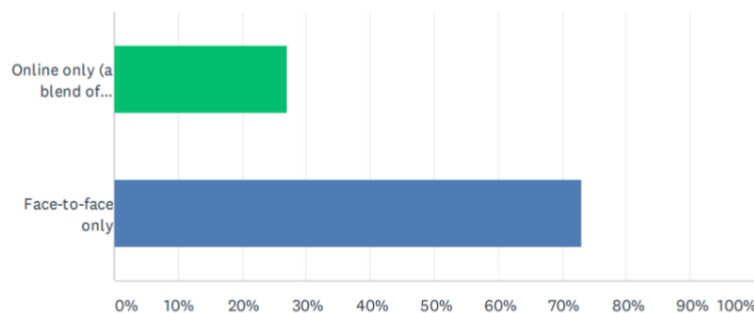
St. John's Lutheran School has nearly 700 students. These families serve our community in a wide variety of ways from doctors and nurses to firefighters, law enforcement, and many other "essential worker" positions. The school is a critical piece of all family's life, not only educating their child, but caring for the children while they are working, working even during the pandemic.

It is essential that St. John's Lutheran School be granted this waiver and open for in-person learning, so that our families can participate in the local economy, work their essential and non-essential jobs, and have a safe place for their child to learn. St. John's has taken all necessary steps to keep our students, staff, and families safe. A complete health and safety protocol for St. John's is attached to this waiver request. It was prepared in accord with the prior guidance and updated in the last two days to meet the guidelines set forth on Friday, July 17 by the California Department of Public Health. Additionally, our school parents have overwhelmingly asked for face-to-face instruction.

On Tuesday, July 14, St. John's administration sent out a survey to all elementary school parents. They were asked what mode of instruction they preferred: face-to-face or online. The graphic below shows that 73% of registered parents want face-to-face and 27% want online.

Q1 What learning option do you want from St. John's?

Answered: 497 Skipped: 9



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
Online only (a blend of synchronous and a synchronous; could be combination/multiple grade groups)	26.96% 134
Face-to-face only	73.04% 363
TOTAL	497

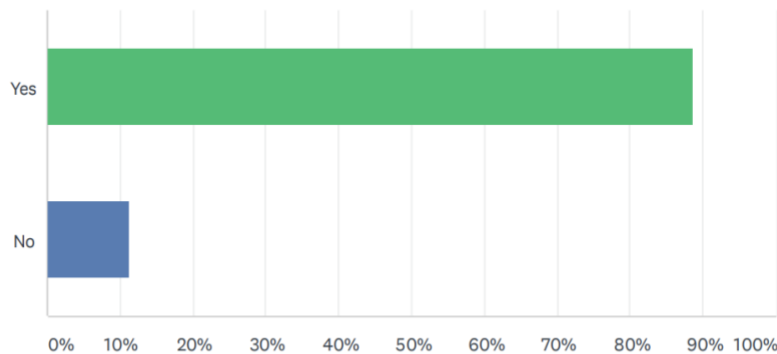


St. John's has a plan in place to offer both face-to-face and online instruction for our students. It is obvious from the data; however, that parents have not only a deep desire to bring their children back to school in a safe and responsible way, but also a need to have child supervision/care during the day so they can perform their own work in the community. St. John's Lutheran School has a full COVID protocol for keeping students and staff safe, which is attached to this waiver request.

The teachers, instructional assistants, and office staff at St. John's also deeply desire to be back at work and have students physically in classrooms. The staff was recently presented with the health, safety and re-opening protocols and have agreed that they overwhelmingly prefer to teach in person than online. The teaching, support, and administrative staff were also re-surveyed this morning in light of the Governor's protocols for waiver petitions requiring input from the teachers and staff. The results stated the same. They are at the same time planning and preparing for online instruction for the 27% of families who want that instructional modality.

Q1 Knowing what the health and safety protocols are at St. John's Lutheran School, do you feel safe coming back to start face-to-face instruction on August 18?

Answered: 79 Skipped: 0

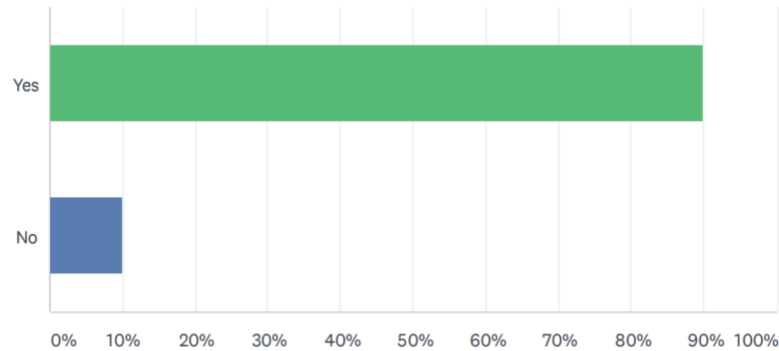


ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes	88.61%	70
No	11.39%	9
TOTAL		79



Q2 Knowing that St. John's will follow all CDC, CDPH, and OCHD guidelines for face-to-face instruction, are you ready to come back to teach and serve students on the first day of school on August 18?

Answered: 79 Skipped: 0



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes	89.87%	71
No	10.13%	8
TOTAL		79

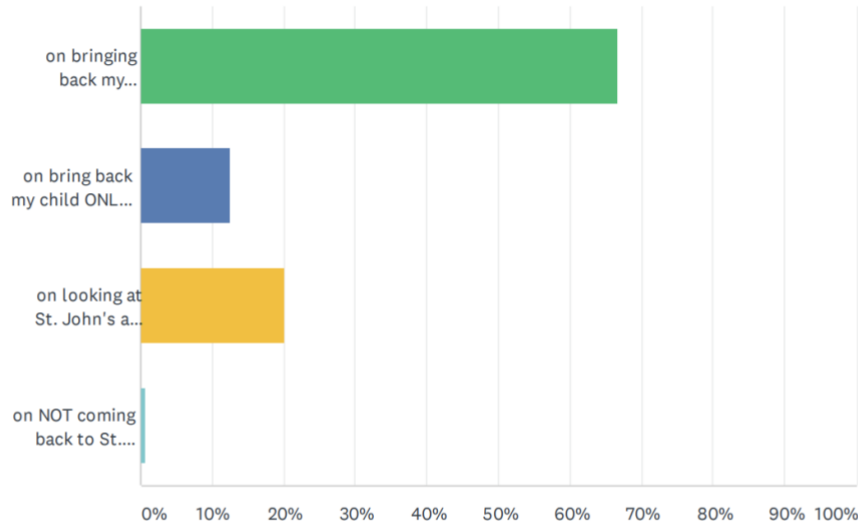
Should this waiver not be granted, our teaching staff will be decimated. St. John's Lutheran School is a tuition driven and funded school. All school salaries are paid for by tuition from parents. In the same July 14 survey, only 67% of our families indicated that they would remain at St. John's no matter the instructional mode. It is highly likely that 33% of our families would un-enroll if we are mandated to remain 100% online, as parents who value in person education, but not allowed to receive it will look to lower cost online curriculum. In this scenario, with 33% of tuition income lost, we would have to drop at least one class per grade level, causing at least 33% of teacher and support staff to lose their jobs. Since we are a religious institution, our staff is not eligible for state and federal unemployment benefits. Their livelihoods would be decimated.

The community of Orange has not been hit with COVID cases as hard as other areas of the county. The most recent information from <https://ochca.maps.arcgis.com/> indicates that the case rate per 100,000 is significantly lower than Anaheim and Santa Ana. There have only been 87 cases of COVID in children in Orange, which is, again, significantly lower than surrounding communities. The majority of St. John's Lutheran school families come from Orange, Villa Park and Tustin, which all have lower rates of COVID than other areas of the county.



Q3 I am planning...

Answered: 496 Skipped: 10



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
on bringing back my child/children no matter what (face-to-face or online).	66.73%	331
on bring back my child ONLY if St. John's offers ONLINE.	12.50%	62
on looking at St. John's as well as other options.	20.16%	100
on NOT coming back to St. John's and will communicate with admissions to withdraw soon.	0.60%	3
TOTAL		496

Should St. John's Lutheran School be granted this waiver, we have all protocols in place to fully follow Governor Gavin Newsom's *COVID-19 and Reopening In-Person Learning Framework for K-12 Schools in California*. This framework can be fully implemented at our institution along with all of the proper industry health and safety guidelines. Staff have access to testing through local partnerships to follow the most up-to-date guidance. Our school has successfully been operating a summer day camp since early June, following all state industry guidelines, with no COVID cases among staff or children. Additionally, St. John's state licensed preschool has also been operating childcare since early June with no COVID cases among staff or children.

The St. John's Lutheran School community needs the school to be open for face-to-face instruction so that parents and caregivers can fully participate in the local and state economies. The school is fully capable to follow all mandated guidelines, as well as, testing and reporting procedures. This waiver is respectfully submitted by the school principal, who serves as the chief executive of the school, as well as Mrs. Betsy Kunau, who serves as the chief operating officer of the organization.

We ask that the decision be made relatively quickly, so that we can provide certainty for families and as much notice to teachers as possible. With Orange County on the 30 county "watch list" and the Governor requiring a county to be off the list for 14 days prior to resumption of in person learning (without a waiver), we are very concerned that the start of the school on August 17, 2020 could be in great jeopardy without the waiver. Thank you for your consideration, and we look forward to hearing from you.

