

Parents and Students,

We thank you for your patience in the reopening process as we look to the SJCS School Board for guidance on the reopening of schools and the development of alternative options for our students. If you were unable to attend the virtual School Board meeting yesterday, or have not yet had a chance to read through the FAQ's on school reopening in the fall, I highly suggest you visit <https://www.stjohns.k12.fl.us/> and read through that document prior to making your decision for instruction this fall.

As a parent I understand your dilemma in returning to school and understand the difficulty in weighing the pros and cons of sending your student back to school in the fall. The IB Programme (especially for Juniors and Seniors) contains vital instructional material and curriculum that must be taught by an authorized IB school, and IB trained teachers. I wish to inform you that I have received guidance from the Florida League of IB Schools regarding continuity of IB instruction through the distance learning model (option #2—this is different from enrolling in St. Johns Virtual School). The stance of FLIBS is that if our students are taught by a trained teacher in an authorized school, in an equally rigorous distance learning environment to the physical classroom, then the IB will allow for such instruction during this given time.

The next concern however is what courses will be offered via “PMHS” distance learning (option #2). While I cannot guarantee your child's schedule will not change, and that all courses will be offered through our distance learning option, I will tell you as your IB Coordinator, that I will do my best to ensure that any student/family who feels uncomfortable returning to school in the fall (again only first 9-weeks through the first semester), should not be penalized by losing access to their IB curriculum, and further their ability to earn the IB Diploma.

I will be working closely with our administration to make every effort to maintain the proper placement and plan for each of our IB Diploma students. Please note however, that this is more critical in the Junior and Senior years as students are currently working on their true IB coursework for IB Diploma purposes. Similarity of schedule is not as critical in the 9th and 10th grade years (with few exceptions for IB Math and IB Spanish), and thus may have to be more flexible with what courses are offered and what teachers teach specific courses given the distance learning environment. Also, please note that when your student returns to “brick and mortar” schooling at PMHS, that we will make every effort to return them to their normal schedule. Again, while I cannot promise that your child's schedule will not change in any way, it is our responsibility to ensure that your child is able to complete the requirements of their current program of enrollment (through meeting the IB requirements of the IB Diploma).

I hope this helps to answer some of the questions surrounding the PMHS Distance-Learning option, and that you and your family are staying safe in this time. I know this is a difficult decision to make, and one that you need to make with your student's safety and success at the forefront. As a parent I do not wish to advise you on your options, but I will stress that in order for your student to maintain connection to the PMHS IB Diploma Programme (specifically 11th and 12th graders), they will need to either choose the school-based “brick and mortar” option or the PMHS Distance Learning option. This is the only way we can ensure they are able to meet the requirements of the IB Diploma.

Please know that your student's safety is paramount to my role as IB Coordinator, and I hope that together we can create an option that allows for a balance of safety and success in these trying times.

If you should have any further questions about either option please contact our Assistant Principal in charge of Curriculum and Instruction, Mrs. Kristin Bozeman at kristin.bozeman@stjohns.k12.fl.us as she may be able to provide more immediate assistance. I am currently hunkered down in my mountain retreat but will try to check and respond to emails as frequently as possible.

Until we meet virtually or in person in August, I wish you and your family a safe and healthy rest of your summer break.

Mr. Jonathan Higgins