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September 2026 Back to School Newsletter

Dear St. Mary Catholic School Families,

I hope you are enjoying a wonderful summer break! We are looking forward to welcoming everyone back to a new school year and to our partnership in creating an amazing learning community. It remains an honor and privilege to continue to serve as your principal and I look forward to seeing you again next week. Below are some reminders of the information we sent out at the end of June along with a few new items.

For Grade 1 to 6, the new school year begins on **Wednesday, September 2 at 8:15 AM.**

Kindergarten regular classes begin on Friday, September 11. Staggered entry for Kindergarten is on Wednesday, September 2, Friday, September 4 and Wednesday, September 9. Please refer to the letter sent to families in June to confirm your child's staggered entry day.

GIST regular classes begin Friday, September 4. Staggered entry days are Wednesday, September 2 and Thursday, September 3. Please refer to the email sent in June for your scheduled day and time.

Please see the attached calendar for 2026-2027. The Calendar is also available on our school webpage

STAY CONNECTED

Website: <https://www.stmary.ecsd.net>

Follow us on [INSTAGRAM](#) : @st_mary_elementary

2026-2027 INFORMATION

School Hours of Operation – 2026/2027

Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Friday		Thursday	
First Bell	8:15	First Bell	8:15
Instructional Time	8:20- 10:12	Instructional Time	8:20 - 10:12
Outdoor Recess	10:12 - 10:30	Outdoor Recess	10:12 - 10:26
Instructional Time	10:30 - 11:54	Instructional Time	10:26 - 11:57
Outdoor Recess	11:54- 12:14	EARLY Dismissal	11:57
Lunch	12:14 - 12:34	Kindergarten - M,T,W and Friday AM 8:15 - 11:22 a.m. PM 11:53 - 3:00 p.m. No Class on Thursday	
Instructional Time (includes 5 min movement break —2:00 pm)	12:34- 3:00		
Dismissal	3:00		



MORNING SUPERVISION and ENTRY into the SCHOOL

For regular programming, supervision will be available beginning at 8:00 a.m. outside each school day until the first bell at 8:15 a.m. If weather conditions are extreme, supervisors will open the doors at 8:00 a.m. for an indoor recess. All students enter the building at their designated grade doors. Please see the attached Entry Door map.

School Hours of Operation – 2026/2027 GIST Program

Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Friday		Thursday	
First Bell	8:50	First Bell	8:50
Instructional Time	8:20- 10:12	Instructional Time	8:20 - 10:12
Guided Groups/ Structured Break	10:12 - 10:30	Guided Groups/ Structured Break	10:12 - 10:26
Instructional Time	10:30 - 11:54	Instructional Time	10:26 - 11:59
Lunch Guided Groups/Structured Break	11:54- 12:34	EARLY Dismissal	11:59
Instructional Time	12:34- 2:30	<u>GIST Staggered Entry Days</u> - Wednesday, September 2 - Thursday, September 3 Please refer to the letter emailed in June for your assigned entry day and time - Regular programming begins September 4	
Dismissal	2:30		

Class Configurations and Staffing 2026/2027

Grade	Teacher	Grade	Teacher
EC AM	Joane Amendola	5A	Kathleen Eistetter
EC PM	Joane Amendola	5/6A	Kimberly Byker
1A	Diane Ngu	6A	Sarah Grey
1/2A	Jessica Kruse	GIST	Amy Cook
2A	Danielle Southwood	Support Teacher	Kadisha Leoppy
3A	Natalie Kortbeek	Music	Kailee Hauger
4A	Dana Alty	Instructional Coach	Carla Barnfather
Admin Team		Support Staff	
Christine Vince Principal	Julie Francois Assistant Principal	Judy Ward - Administrative Assistant Cathy Cartmell - Educational Assistant Maureen Erinaugha- Educational Assistant Rita Wang - Educational Assistant Anupama Menon - Education Assistant Phibi Thapa - Education Assistant Allison Dietz - TAOT Katie Wilkes - EBS - GIST Brittany Reid - TABT Norma Barahona - TABT - GIST Jamie Covington - TABT - GIST Lisa Paul-Mellors - TABT - GIST Kaitlin Lyon - TA-SL - GIST Nisarg Pathak - TA-OT - GIST	
Custodial			
Armando Marquicias	Yemson Fernandez		

FIRST DAY of SCHOOL - Full Day - Wednesday, September 2, 2026

- Supervision for students starts at 8:00 a.m. through the school year. For the safety of the children, please do not bring your child to school before 8:00 a.m.
- Student entry into the school, from the first day on, **is through their grade doors**, same as for the last school year. Teachers will meet students at their grade door on the first day of school to welcome them back to school and to help them with their school supplies.

A grade door map is attached for your information.

Drop Off & Pick Up

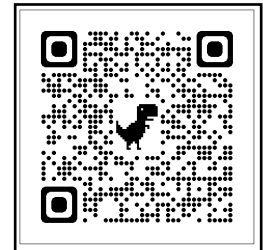
Please do not park in the bus lane at any time.

The church across the street allows parents to use their lot before and after school.

You are welcome to use the DROP & GO lane on the east side of the school (daycare doors) if you are stopping to let out students ONLY.

– this is not for parents who wish to get out of their vehicle.

Please follow the link <https://arcg.is/1H4ieS1> or use the QR code to view the map explaining which zones are for parking and which are for driving through only. Parking is available in the church lot during pick up and drop off.



SCHOOL FEES

Government approved school fees charged are used in student programming and/or services throughout the school year. Your child's school fees will be **available for payment on September 15, 2026** in the parent Powerschool Portal <https://powerschool.ecsd.net>.

Please make your fee payment by the end of September, 2026. Bus fees are available for payment now.

SCHOOL SUPPLIES - 2026-2027

Parents had the option of pre-ordering school supplies on-line through School Start School Supplies having them delivered to their homes. All grade supply lists are available on the St. Mary website www.stmary.ecsd.net. Ordering through School Start was optional, however all items on the supply list are required.

On Monday, August 31, between 3:00 p.m. - 4:00 p.m. students in Grades 1A and 1/2A are welcome to bring their school supplies to the school and meet their teacher.

RECESS BEFORE EATING LUNCH

Lunch times will remain the same at last school year. Students will have outdoor recess from 11:54 am - 12:14 pm and will eat their lunch from 12:14 pm to 12:34 pm.

CLASS PLACEMENTS For 2026-2027

An email was sent to families on August 27, 2026, from your child's teacher welcoming you and your child to their classroom community.

A great deal of time, effort and thought has gone into the process of student placements. Careful consideration was given to create classrooms that are balanced academically and socially. Our class lists are structured to provide equitable class sizes at each grade level. Moving students is difficult without causing imbalances and inequities.

Thank you so much for being positive with your child and helping him or her understand that it is impossible to place all students with a preferred best friend or teacher. All of our staff work hard to make school a positive experience for all students. The staff are eagerly looking forward to enriching your child's life. Thank you for understanding that it can take a few weeks for a child to acclimate to a new grade, peer group and teacher.

YMCA CHILD CARE at ST. MARY for 2026-2027 (Before & After, Kindercare & 4 Year Olds)

St. Mary continues to have YMCA Before and After School Child Care as well as Kindercare morning and afternoon programs for the upcoming school year. This year the YMCA will continue to run a Pre-Kinder program starting at St. Mary! This program welcomes 4-year-olds and runs from 7AM - 6PM (Monday - Friday). All children in this program need to be potty trained and have no naps during the day. If you would like to get more information about this program, you can visit <https://ymcanab.ca/programs/child-care>.

As the YMCA operates independently from the school, please contact Beth Pede at 587-710-7815 or by email at beth.pede@northernalberta.ymca.ca or northernalberta.ymca.ca for more information on child care available.

SEPTEMBER - IMPORTANT CALENDAR DATES

August 31	New Student Tour 3:00 p.m. Meet at main entrance to school Grade 1A and 1/2A school supply drop off 3:00 - 4:00 PM
September 2	First day of School for 2026-2027 School Term. Classes resume 8:15 am. - FULL DAY OF CLASS GIST Gradual Entry Day Small group day for Kindergarten
September 3	GIST Gradual Entry Day
September 4	Small group day for Kindergarten Regular programming begins for GIST
September 8	Labour Day - NO CLASSES
September 9	Small group day for Kindergarten
September 11	Kindergarten program begins
September 15	School Fees go live Please pay by September 30
September 16	Curriculum Information Night: - 5 - 6 p.m. Back to School BBQ - School Council Annual General Meeting - 6:30 P.M. - Curriculum Information Night 6:30 p.m. - 7:30 p.m.
September 21	ECSD Cross Country Run - Rundle Park
September 30	Truth and Reconciliation Day recognition - Wear your Orange Shirts - NO CLASSES

GRADE 4-6 CHROMEBOOKS for 2026-2027

All students in grades 4-6 will need to bring a Chromebook or laptop as part of their school supplies. These devices will be used daily to access Google Classroom and other online resources both at school and home.

We are grateful for the support of our Fundraising Association, which has provided Chromebooks over the years. However, they will now focus on other initiatives to enhance the school experience.

If purchasing a Chromebook or laptop for your child is not feasible, please contact the Principal to inquire about an alternative solution.

Please note that students are expected to bring their devices to and from school each day. It is their responsibility to ensure the device is charged and ready for use. We will not have backup devices available, so if a student forgets their device, they will need to complete their work on paper or at home.

Thank you for your partnership in education.

BUSSING 2026-2027



If your child will be **new** to taking the yellow bus, for service on the first day of school (September 2, 2026), the deadline for submitting your online 2025-2026 Transportation Application was May 30, 2026. **Applications submitted after this day are not guaranteed for first day service.**

All NEW applications **must** be completed online through the following link <https://ecsd.mybusplanner.ca/>

Parents are asked to monitor their Powerschool Parent portal to obtain their child's route information prior to the first day of school as well as checking weekly for any changes to the schedule.

Bus pass fees Kindergarten through Grade 6 for 2025-26 have increased and are all **\$70.00 for Yellow bus** and \$60.00 ETS, with no additional family plan discount.

Bus Eligibility has changed for new riders for the 2026-2027 school year as per the Alberta Government funding. New riders will be eligible for bussing if they are **1.6 km** away from the school. However, if you live closer and your child already rides the bus, service may continue. Please check with Transportation at 780-441-6078 if there are any questions.

Bus Passes - There are no bus passes for students this school year. It is left to the drivers and school supervisors to do attendance for the children riding their bus.

Bus Pass Payments

Bus pass payments are again being collected directly through our Transportation department. Bus fees have already been applied to student accounts based on applications received and payment can be made through the Powerschool parent portal either monthly or for the entire school year. Any questions may be directed to our Transportation department at 780-441-6078.

SACRAMENTAL PREPARATION - St. Thomas More Parish

Sacramental preparation is NOW open at St. Thomas More Parish. Please visit the St. Thomas More Parish website for more information <https://stm.caedm.ca/sacraments/>