

Catholic Schools

Reopening with Trust: A Planning Framework for the 2020/21 School Year

Catholic schools provide a top-quality education. We look forward to continuing that education, in-person, in the school year to come.

Four guiding principles for reopening Catholic schools:

- 1.** The safety and well-being of students and school employees are our primary concerns. We will do what we must so that everyone in our schools feels safe and undeterred.
- 2.** Everything possible is being done to reopen school buildings and provide a faith-filled education in a safe and timely manner
- 3.** The progress of the COVID-19 pandemic in Illinois remains unpredictable, and there remains the potential that school buildings must be closed again if a significant rise in cases were to occur.
- 4.** Faithful citizenship is key – we expect our families to take personal responsibility for the common good as well as their own safety.

We live in extraordinary times. The COVID-19 pandemic has impacted every aspect of our lives and has left a mark on Catholic education. Our Catholic schools quickly evolved, using the creativity, ingenuity, and dedication of our school employees to maintain quality education for our students. Our Catholic schools have received high praise from families and the general public for their incredible work during through these unprecedented challenges.

We have consulted with public health, education and civil authorities in forming our plan. It is our intent to safely reopen our school buildings to all families this fall and the following information lays out how we plan to do just that. This framework identifies key areas for schools to consider and work on as they safely reopen.

ALL STUDENTS: Welcome back to the classroom for full-day instruction!



COHORT MODEL:

Students will be assigned to a “cohort,” which will correspond to their

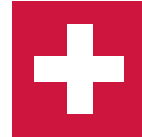
homeroom class and will remain with those same classmates throughout the day. Students within a cohort will remain physically as far apart as possible to prevent the spread of illness.



MASKS:

All individuals over the age of two will be required to wear a mask throughout

the school day. Masks may only be removed during designated activities (such as lunch and recess) and only then if students remain physically distant.



INFECTION PROTOCOLS:

Students suffering with COVID-19 symptoms and/

or positive COVID-19 tests will be expected to quarantine and seek medical attention before returning to class.



BUILDING

TRAFFIC: Schools will provide pickup and drop-off procedures, walking

routes within the school building, etc. Signage on the floors will be used to help traffic flow.



TEMPERATURE

CHECKS: Parents should take their children's temperatures

daily. Temperature checks will also occur as students enter the school building every day.



VIRTUAL LEARNING:

Families who are not ready to return to classrooms will

still have the option for online learning.

The Cohort Model: Students and staff are grouped by homerooms and these groupings are kept as static as possible by having the same group of children stay with the same staff (all day for young children, and as much as possible for older children). This strategy helps maintain a safe environment by strictly limiting the interaction between students and allows for rapid response and containment in the event of a student's becoming infected. As part of this model, schools will strive to physically separate students in the same cohort as much as possible to help mitigate risk. For example, classroom furniture should be arranged to maximize space between students.

Masks and Personal Protective Equipment (PPE): All individuals in school buildings (students, employees, visitors/volunteers, etc.) must wear face coverings at all times, unless they are younger than two years of age. Individuals who have a specific medical condition may be exempted. Social distance of at least six feet apart must be maintained in the moments when masks are not worn (example: lunch and recess). Families will be asked to purchase at least two reusable masks for their children, with the expectation that masks will be washed after every school day. Students using disposable masks should discard them at the end of the school day and parents should provide extras to replace a damaged or lost disposable mask. Masks with distracting messages or images will not be allowed. All students and employees will receive training on proper mask-wearing.

Arrival Procedures – Wellness Checks: Schools will provide pickup and drop-off procedures that ensure safe distance is maintained. All students and employees must wear face masks on arrival, and schools will perform “Wellness Checks” on all students that consist of temperature checks to ensure any student with a fever over 100.4°F is sent home. Students will wash their hands or receive hand sanitizer. Students will be asked “Do you feel sick in any way?” or “Do you have a cough or fever?” Parents and guardians should not enter the building to escort students to/from classrooms at arrival and dismissal. Schools using busing will create distance between children, such as one child per row, when possible.

Dismissal: Parents should remain in their vehicles and not congregate outside school exits. Schools may implement procedures for screening student pickups to ensure ongoing safety.

Foot Traffic Flow: Physical guides, such as tape on floors or sidewalks and signs on walls, will ensure that staff and children remain six feet apart in lines and at other times during the school day. Schools may use as much of their building space as possible to achieve social distancing and may close high-traffic portions of the building when not used. Student lockers should not be shared.

Facility Cleaning, Hygiene and Shared School Supplies: Schools will follow aggressive cleaning and disinfecting procedures. Sharing of school supplies such as pencils, markers, and art supplies will not be permitted. Equipment that must be shared should be used by as few children as possible and cleaned and disinfected before and after each use. All students will be provided access to handwashing facilities and hand sanitizer in school. Food and drink should not be shared (including student snacks, lunches, and birthday treats). Food and drink should be covered when not being consumed. Drinking fountains should only be used to fill reusable water bottles or to fill disposable cups provided by the school. If drinking fountains are used, they will be cleaned regularly. For the 2020/21 school year, schools will discontinue the use of perfect attendance awards and assessments based on absenteeism.

Special Area Classes: Whenever possible, specials classes will be held in each cohort's homeroom classroom. This is particularly emphasized for classes such as art, music, foreign language, STEM, and health. Music classes should avoid singing or asking students to play woodwinds or brass instruments (including recorders). Teachers may opt to move classes outside, especially PE classes, when possible, but will avoid physical exertion while students are wearing masks.

Parent-Teacher Meetings: Parent and teacher meetings should be conducted virtually, if possible. If face-to-face meetings are required, meetings will take place in large open areas (such as unused classrooms) instead of more confined spaces (such as the principal's office). Meetings must be conducted with the use of masks and social distancing.

Lunch: Schools will determine procedures for lunch breaks, but in most cases, lunch will be held in classrooms to prevent cohorts from intermingling in a cafeteria. Lunches may be delivered to the classrooms to avoid having students mingling in the cafeteria. No more than 50 students may use the cafeteria at one time. Only members of the same cohort may sit near each other and all students, including those within cohorts should distance as much as possible.

Recess: Physical exertion will be discouraged during recess when possible (recognizing that children, particularly young children, do need physical recreation). When recess is held outside, masks may be removed and stored in paper bags if distancing is maintained.

Medical Care: Schools may provide for the ongoing medical care for students, as per a normal year.

Visitors and Volunteers: Visitors to school buildings will be limited as much as possible. This means events such as "Special Persons Day," which attracts visits may be cancelled or postponed. Access for parents who must come to school may be limited to the main office. The use of volunteers will be minimized as well.

Family Trips: Families are discouraged from traveling out of town during the pandemic. Students who do go on family trips should remain home for two weeks after returning from another country or state. Students should inform schools immediately if they display COVID-19 symptoms during the two-week period.

International Students: International students will be asked to remain quarantined for at least two weeks following travel to their country of origin. Students should be allowed to complete work virtually while at home.

Special Events (Masses, assemblies, field trips, etc.): Large group gatherings, such as assemblies or HSA meetings, will be cancelled or conducted virtually. If events are held, social distancing must be observed and group size limited to the extent possible. Field trips will not be permitted during the pandemic. In most cases, Masses will be streamed virtually. Live Masses will be celebrated in very small groups.

This plan is designed to help schools and parents successfully and safely reopen our school buildings. The plan was designed over several weeks during the early summer, and integrates feedback from parents, educators, medical professionals, and others. The plan also reflects important guidance from the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE), the Illinois Department of Public Health (IDPH) and other governmental authorities.

If you have any other questions about the coming school year, we invite you to contact your principal or the Office of Catholic Schools.

In all things, remember that God is watching over us and blessing our efforts.
Mary, Mother of God, *Pray for Us.*