



Guidance for Catholic School Administrators for Reopening Schools

'FEAR NOT, FOR I AM WITH YOU;
BE NOT DISMAYED, FOR I AM YOUR GOD.'
ISAIAH 41:10

Reopening Catholic Schools During a Pandemic

The purpose of this document is to share guidance with the Diocese of Sioux City Catholic Schools on protocols for reopening school buildings after the governor's proclamation to close schools due to COVID-19. This guidance has been formed and informed by consultation with health and education professionals, and school leaders. It will not, and cannot anticipate or address every situation that may arise as we reopen our schools in August. However, our hope is that it will provide basic information on procedures and protocols that Catholic schools in the Diocese of Sioux City will follow to ensure the health and safety of students and staff members in our buildings. We also acknowledge these procedures are intended to mitigate risk, but cannot eliminate it completely. Catholic school administrators should also communicate with their public school partners to be prepared for their approach to reopening.

Onsite vs. Continuous Online vs. Hybrid Learning

In order to best serve our families and students, we plan to be onsite in August. In the event we need to dismiss groups of students or the entire school for positive COVID cases in our buildings, we will be prepared to move to continuous online learning for periods of time to provide for deep cleaning and quarantining as needed. Hybrid learning may be used in cases of students who are unable to attend onsite. When positive cases warrant continuous online learning, staff may use a combination of printed and online resources to support student learning remotely. Professional development for continuous online instruction is planned and will be offered to all staff starting in July 2020. Specific student needs related to academics for special needs, English learners, etc. will be addressed in individual schools' plans.

In addition to schools' Return-to-Learn plans, administrators may want to review this [CDC Readiness Checklist](#). It covers many things from the Return-to-Learn plans, but is provided in a convenient checklist format and addresses general considerations, daily/weekly considerations once school resumes, and preparations for when someone gets sick. The checklist also assists administrators in identifying point persons to support the administrator during anticipated rapidly changing circumstances.

Overview of Current Health and Safety Guidelines for Schools

Based on federal and state guidance and recommendations available at this time, we are asking all Catholic schools in the Diocese of Sioux City to follow these practices to safely re-open in August:

1. Stay home if sick: As schools commit to reopening, it is vitally important that everyone does their part and stays home if they are feeling sick or have any [symptoms](#) associated with COVID-19. **Parents should be instructed to keep their child at home if they are ill, and/or have a temperature of 100.3 degrees or higher.** This means that schools will need to have enhanced protocols in place for managing staff and student absences.

2. Face coverings and masks*: Students (grades K-12) and staff should wear face coverings or masks upon entering and exiting the building, in hallways, and in common areas (library, commons, Mass, etc). Masks are not required while students are able to socially-distance in classrooms. However, at full capacity, many classrooms may not be able to socially distance, and therefore face coverings may be required. Exceptions will be granted for those students or staff for whom it is not safe to wear masks due to age, medical conditions, or other considerations. In cases in which face coverings or masks are not possible, social distancing of 6 feet is required as much as possible. Parents will be responsible for providing students with face coverings or masks. Schools will have backup disposable masks available for students who need them. Staff may choose to wear their own mask or one provided by the school. Face shields may be used instead of masks, especially for lower elementary staff and students (see guidance [here](#)) Shields can be easily cleaned and even decorated for younger students. Teachers should also use masks or shields when teaching in small group settings in close proximity to students. Schools should plan for educating staff and students on appropriate use of face coverings, prevention of stigmas associated with wearing/not wearing a face covering, and staff responsibility for ensuring guidelines are followed. ***Schools should also revisit Emergency Operations Plans to provide direction on masking during drills and evacuations, and include a supply of masks in classroom emergency kits.**

3. Frequent hand washing and hand sanitizing: All students and staff must engage in frequent handwashing, including upon arrival, before and after meals and recess, after bathroom use, after coughing or sneezing, and before dismissal. Protocols must be established for effective handwashing in which individuals use soap and water to wash all surfaces of their hands for at least 20 seconds, rinse thoroughly, and dry with an individual disposable towel (air dryers not recommended). If handwashing is not

available, hand sanitizer with at least 60 percent alcohol content can be used. Handwashing education pieces are included in all schools' Return-to-Learn plans.

4. Physical distancing*: Students and staff will maintain a social distance of 6 feet to the greatest extent possible. Desks/tables will be spaced 3-6 feet apart¹ facing the same direction, and protocols must be developed to maintain this distance when students are entering and exiting the building and moving throughout the school (including to and within restrooms) when feasible. Tape or signage to ensure distancing in common areas (library tables, commons, etc.) should be used to guide student and staff distancing. (See p. 7-8 for grade-specific guidance on distancing) As adults are more susceptible than children, teachers should be more cognizant of distancing from students. In cases where teacher distancing is difficult, masks should be worn. ***Schools should also revisit Emergency Operations Plans to consider how to ensure social distancing during drills and evacuations.**

5. Isolation and discharge protocols for students who may become ill during the day: Schools will develop protocols for isolation and discharge of students who become sick during the school day. A specific room, or other method of isolation must be maintained for students with COVID-19 symptoms that is separate from the nurse's office where other ailments are treated.

6. Entry screening: It is not currently recommended to temperature check students at building entry due to the significant number of both false-positive and false-negative results. Student and staff temperatures should be checked at home each day before leaving for school when or if symptoms are present. Schools should consider asking parents for assurance that they will screen their students at home in the form of a signed agreement, or checkbox in the SIS system. Periodic text alerts or other messaging reminding parents to do daily screenings at home may also be helpful.

7. Stagger arrival and dismissal times to minimize crowding: Student pick-up and drop-off should occur outside the school building.

- Utilize visual cues, signage, and barriers to direct traffic flow and demonstrate social distancing.
- Consider dividing entry points rather than funneling all students through the same entry space.

8. Visitors / Volunteers: Outside visitors and volunteers in general will not be permitted to enter school buildings to ensure the health and safety of the school and

¹ American Academy of Pediatrics

https://services.aap.org/en/pages/2019-novel-coronavirus-covid-19-infections/clinical-guidance/covid-19-planning-considerations-return-to-in-person-education-in-schools/?fbclid=IwAR3UCquyNuV8Z55m-FCrktO2igc6XXDxFTWJUEG1_rsMI-4ZGsW9XawZbxw

the larger community. Deliveries will be dropped either outside the building or left inside the door of the school. (Signs can be posted for delivery workers to leave packages directly inside school entrances) Parents are encouraged to enter the building only in an emergency situation and must wear masks upon entering the building. Student teacher partnerships and limited practicums can be honored but student teachers must follow all staff guidelines.

9. Large group gatherings: Our Catholic schools pride themselves on family connections and often hold large gatherings for prayer services, family nights, etc. Schools should refrain from these types of activities during this school year until we can once again gather safely in large groups without risk of COVID spread. Back-to-school nights, open houses, family nights, etc. should be done virtually.

10. Teachers & Staff: Given what is known about transmission dynamics, adults and adult staff within schools should attempt to maintain a distance of 6 feet from other persons as much as possible, particularly around other adult staff. For all settings, physical distancing by and among adults is strongly recommended, and meetings and curriculum planning should take place virtually if possible, per American Academy of Pediatrics.

11. Signage: Schools will post signs reminding students and staff of physical distancing, indicating one-way routes in hallways, spacing out at sinks in restrooms, marking distancing on floors with tape, etc. CDC signage may be accessed [here](#) under “print resources.” Signs are also available through AEA Creative Services and can be found [here](#). Orders can be placed through this [link](#).

12. Cohorting: Staff and students should cohort whenever possible. Class periods can be staggered by cohorts to limit numbers of students in hallways at one time. Recess can be scheduled by cohorts to limit the number of students interacting on a playground at any given time. Cohorts can also be used for busing, but schools should consult with their public school on transportation if/when it is used by Catholic school students. Schools should consider assigned seating at all grade levels in all classrooms to facilitate contact tracing, should it be needed at any point.

13. Training: All school staff will complete the [AEA Learning Health and Safety Modules](#)

14. Transportation: Schools should consult with their local public school to collaborate on guidance and requirements for students who require transportation to and from school.

Personal Protective Equipment

Assumptions

It is important for schools to begin ordering key safety supplies now due to potential shortages or longer delivery times for items in high demand. This document follows these basic assumptions to develop suggestions for supply items and initial recommended ordering quantities:

- Students will bring their own face coverings (shields or masks) to school, but schools should have a backup supply of masks on hand for students who may need them during the school day.
- Schools will provide face coverings or masks for all teachers and staff who do not bring their own.
- Students and staff will engage in frequent hand sanitizing.
- Custodians will need to be equipped with appropriate masks, gloves, and a proper waste disposal medium (red biohazard bags.)
- Nurses and/or front office staff will need additional specialized supplies to properly isolate and discharge suspected COVID-19 positive students.
- Staff may choose to use face shields instead of masks, especially for lower elementary classrooms (see guidance [here](#))

Note: This is not an exhaustive list of all COVID-19-related supplies. Schools will need to consider additional supply categories – such as hand soap and building cleaning supplies – for which they may need to increase current purchasing quantities. However, these items are not the focus of the lists below, as there are no apparent supply constraints that would limit the ability of districts or schools to purchase these items on typical timelines.

Purchasing Responsibility

It is each school's responsibility to acquire the supplies needed to safely and responsibly reopen their school buildings. Schools may use federal Elementary and Secondary School Education Relief Fund (ESSER) funds to purchase PPE needed for their school, and should access these funds through their local public school or LEA.

Recommended Supplies and Volumes

It is recommended that schools order enough supplies to last through first quarter of the school year. Schools should plan on tracking actual usage rates to inform future ordering.

Disposable Masks

**N95 masks may be purchased for staff members at high-risk for COVID-19 or those with heightened health concerns

Group	1 week supply	12 week supply	Assumptions
Students	1 per student per week (200 students - 200 masks per week)	2400 masks	1 mask per student per week (provides for forgetting, losing, etc.)
Teachers**	1 per teacher per week (20 staff - 20 masks)	400 masks	1 mask per teacher per week if needed
Nurses/Secretaries	10	120	10 masks per week per nurse or secretary

PPE for Staff in Frequent Close Contact with Those Who Are Sick

(nurses, custodians, secretaries, etc.)

Item	1 week supply	12 week supply	Assumptions
Disposable gloves	10	120	10 prs gloves per week per staff member
Gowns	5	60	5 gowns per week per staff
Face shields	2	NA	2 re-usable shields per staff
Biohazard waste disposal container	1	NA	1 container per staff
N95 Masks	5	60	5 masks per week per staff

Building Supplies

Item	1 week supply	12 week supply	Assumptions
Hand sanitizer	1/3 gallon per classroom	4 gallons per classroom	1/3 gallon per classroom per week
Soap	(see note p. 5)		

Cleaning spray	(see note p. 5)		
Sanitizing wipes	(see note p. 5)		

Distancing Guidelines by Grade Level

PK-KG

Since distancing among small children is difficult to implement, as are face coverings, this age group should focus on more effective strategies such as hand hygiene, cohorting, and outdoor activities when possible. Educating families on infection prevention may also be helpful. When 6 ft. distancing is not possible, teachers will wear face coverings. Plexiglass barriers may be necessary to ensure distancing at shared tables in classrooms. Sharing of classroom materials (community school supplies such as pencils, crayons, markers, etc.) should be eliminated. Consult with your pastor on distancing during school Masses. It may be possible to only space between cohorts for younger students.

Grades 1-5

Children should distance 6 feet whenever possible, and wear face coverings outside the classroom during times mentioned above on page 3. Use assigned seating in classrooms. Cohort classes to minimize student and staff crossover (art, music, PE teachers come to classrooms or use outdoor or larger spaces) Face coverings will not be required for outdoor recess. When 6 ft. distancing is not possible, teachers will wear face coverings . Sharing of classroom materials (community school supplies such as pencils, crayons, markers, etc.) should be eliminated. Consult with your pastor on distancing during school Masses. It may be possible to only space between cohorts for younger students.

Grades 6-12

Students should distance 6 feet whenever possible, and wear face coverings outside the classroom during times mentioned above on page 3. Use assigned seating in classrooms. Avoid close physical proximity for choir, band, PE and conduct activities outdoors or spread out when possible. Eliminate use of lockers if possible, or assign them by cohorts and spread out if necessary. Teachers rotate instead of students when feasible. When 6 ft. distancing is not possible, teachers will wear face coverings.

Sharing of classroom materials (community school supplies such as pencils, crayons, markers, etc.) should be eliminated. Consult with your pastor on distancing during school Masses. Older students who do not cohort during the school day should socially distance during school Masses.

Mass Guidelines

Schools should refer to guidelines below and work with pastors on planning for celebration of school Masses. Please keep the following in mind:

- Students in grades 3-12 should follow established protocols for Masses including distancing, face-coverings, post-Mass Communion, etc.
- Students in grades K-2 may sit in groups or cohorts for supervision and management purposes but must follow face covering requirements. Schools may also consider other options such as virtual Mass for younger students who will not be receiving the Eucharist.
- Student participation in the Mass should be limited, such as one student reading scripture, and one student reading petitions.
- There will be no procession, no gifts brought forward, no singing, and minimal servers in consultation with the pastor.
- School gymnasiums may be used for school Mass to accommodate larger groups of students again, in consultation with the pastor.

The full version of the Diocese of Sioux City Mass guidelines is included in this link:

[Instructions for Resuming the Public Celebration of Mass](#)

Lunchroom Practices

Distancing

Students should be cohorted, by classroom/grade, or small groups and staggered to ensure distancing. Lunch periods may need to be lengthened or adjusted to allow for an increased number of smaller groups of students. Combinations of classroom and cafeteria dining on alternate days could be used to ensure distancing. Schools should consider assigned seating at lunch tables (to allow for contact tracing if needed.)

Schools could also consider additional spaces for lunch including classrooms, gymnasiums, etc.

Cleaning & Sanitizing

All staff and students will wash hands or use hand sanitizer before and after eating. Serving lines should be sanitized between groups or classes. If meals are delivered to classrooms, equipment should be sanitized after delivery.

Recess / Playground

Considerations

- Schools should assess whether playground equipment and structures can support use by multiple groups of students with reasonable cleaning after use. (For example, a structure that is crawled on and encounters many sets of hands may best remain unused, while a slide only requires handrail cleaning between uses.)
- Offer recess/outdoor play in shifts or cohorts. If multiple groups are outside at the same time, ensure distancing between cohorts and/or different play activities.

Activities

Engage children in activities and games that limit physical contact such as:

- Relays, red light/green light, obstacle courses
- Walking, running, dancing
- Circuit challenges with individual stations or centers
- Seek advice from PE teachers on other low-contact activities

Cleaning and Sanitizing

High contact surfaces such as handrails, handles, balls, etc. should be wiped down between groups or shifts. All students should wash hands after recess and before returning to the classroom.

Cleaning and Disinfecting - General

Schools will need to undertake new protocols and routines to ensure that facilities and

surfaces are regularly cleaned, sanitized, and disinfected in accordance with health and safety guidelines and that hazardous materials are disposed of properly.

- Elimination of high-touch or high-risk surfaces is preferred to frequent cleaning. (For example, classroom doors can be left open until all students have entered.)
- Drinking fountains can be replaced with bottle fillers, or encourage students to bring their own water bottles. Other drinking fountains should not be used.
- Commonly touched surfaces such as handrails, doorknobs, light switches, sink and faucet handles, etc. should be cleaned frequently.
- Outdoor play equipment with high-touch surfaces (handles, railings, etc.) should also be cleaned frequently
- Schools should reconsider the use of locker spaces - especially if they are shared. Lockers can be spaced out, not shared, or eliminated (as long as students are not required to transport unreasonable numbers of books)
- Bathrooms should receive frequent cleaning and disinfection. Distancing between sinks, etc. should be indicated.
- Computer keyboard covers can be used to facilitate frequent cleaning if shared by students. After use, students should clean devices with disinfecting wipes before putting them away if sharing.

Communication

- Refer to the **Leadership Portion** of the Return-to-Learn plan on communication and ensure frequent and timely communication with your various stakeholders on reopening, return-to-learn, changes in delivery methods, etc.
- Contact public school for transportation planning/guidance.
- Virtual open houses and back-to-school nights should be used when possible
- Socially-distanced or virtual staff meetings, trainings, etc.
- Teacher-created videos modeling what they look like with masks, revealing differences in the classroom, etc.
- Tell building principal if staff or student comes into close contact* with a person who tested positive for COVID-19. (*Close contact is defined as less than 6 feet for more than 15 minutes.)
- Staff and families must inform the school if they, or their student have symptoms of COVID-19, a positive test for COVID-19, or were exposed to someone with COVID-19 within the last 14 days.

Confirmed Cases of COVID-19

1. Immediately contact your county public health department for next steps.
2. Inform the Catholic Schools Office and/or Superintendent of Schools.
3. Refer to your local Return-to-Learn communication guidance on the process to notify staff, families, and the public of school closures and any restrictions in place to limit COVID-19 exposure. This plan should include sharing general non-identifying communication with the school community ([sample template](#)).

Returning to Work or School after a Confirmed Case

1. Students and staff should provide a note from a physician documenting it is safe to return to school.
2. If questions remain, contact your county public health department for guidance and consult [CDC Guidelines for Returning](#) to determine when it is safe to return to school after showing symptoms of COVID-19, testing positive, or coming in close contact* with someone who tested positive. (*Close contact is defined as less than 6 feet for more than 15 minutes.).

Catholic Schools Office
Diocese of Sioux City

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