



FAITH IN OUR FUTURE

Diocesan Plan Schools 2021-2022



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This is an Executive Summary of the protocols and procedures, known as the Office of Catholic Schools

(OCS) *Diocesan Plan*, for in-school student attendance at the Catholic Diocese of Peoria elementary and secondary schools. The *OCS Diocesan Plan* includes guidance on health and safety, human resources, finance, and communications.

There are three guiding principles of the *OCS Diocesan Plan* of our schools:

1. Our school buildings will provide a safe and faith-filled environment for our students.
2. The course of the pandemic in Illinois remains fluid. As such, this *OCS Diocesan Plan* may be updated on a continual basis as pandemic data and guidelines are regularly reviewed.
3. OCS asks that our school families assist us in serving the common good and work in cooperation with not only their diocesan school but also with the Office of Catholic Schools and the Illinois Department of Public Health to the best of their ability.

The *OCS Diocesan Plan* was created from discussions and advisement of the medical community, Illinois Catholic school superintendents, Diocese of Peoria pastors and principals, Catholic Mutual Group, the diocesan Offices of the Bishop, the Chancery, and the Office of Catholic Schools. Guidance documents from the Illinois Department of Public Health, Illinois State Board of Education, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the American Academy of Pediatrics, and the Governor of Illinois' *Restore Illinois* plan were also studied.

HEALTH AND SAFETY REQUIREMENTS

This section provides guidelines related to the safety, health and hygiene of students and include specific ideas for integrating into instruction and the school day.

THE COHORT MODEL

The Catholic Diocese of Peoria's elementary schools are to operate under a "cohort" model. Under a cohort model, students and staff are grouped by grade level. These groupings are designed to allow the same group of students to stay with the same staff (all day for young children and as much

as possible for older children) while minimizing the risk of cross contamination between cohorts. It also allows single classes to be quarantined in the event of infection, rather than closing the entire school building. Grade level teachers are considered part of the same cohort as their students, but other teachers (including specials' teachers) and staff are considered outside the cohort.

Even while utilizing the cohort model, schools should strive to physically separate students in the same cohort as much as possible. Such separation will help mitigate risk. For example, classroom furniture should be arranged to maximize social distancing between students.

Diocesan secondary school administrators whose plans cannot operate under a cohort model should design plans to meet the health and safety requirements of wearing masks, practicing social distancing, and using proper hygiene and safety.

Employees and students shall self-report to their individual school and/or their local public health department when experiencing any of the symptoms that are associated with COVID19 during the school day.

MASKS AND PERSONAL PROTECTIVE EQUIPMENT (PPE)

The choice to wear a mask will be the decision of the parent or guardian of their school aged children. School employees will make their own individual decision.

All individuals in school buildings (students, employees) are to wear masks, by the suggestion of the CDC and IPHD.

Families are asked to supply masks for their child/children, if they choose to use them. Reusable cloth masks are allowed with the stipulation that they be washed every night in preparation for the next school day if using the same mask.

Disposable masks are preferred in the school setting with the intention of disposing at the end of every school day. Parents should send students with extra PPE in case masks are damaged during the day.

Masks should not contain messages or images that would distract from the educational environment of the school.

Schools will ensure an ongoing supply of PPE (disposable face masks, cleaning supplies, hand sanitizers, etc.) for all employees and will maintain a minimum supply of masks for students in case students forget or break their personal mask.

Masks may be removed in special circumstances, i.e., when eating or drinking or engaged in outside activities or outside instruction per IDPH guidelines. Individuals should wash or sanitize hands before putting their face covering back on.

Schools will maintain a regular supply of gloves for cleaning surfaces and treating students with medical injuries/illnesses.

ARRIVAL PROCEDURES – WELLNESS CHECKS

Students and employees will utilize as many exterior doors as possible and assign classes to enter through only their assigned doorway in order to minimize the risk of cross-contamination between cohorts. Congestion should be avoided when entering or departing the building.

Students shall wash hands or receive hand sanitizer upon entering the school each morning to assist with safety and hygiene.

Parents and guardians should not enter the building to escort students to/from classrooms at arrival and dismissal.

Student bus riders will be socially distanced as much as possible, and students will wear a mask and use hand sanitizer when traveling via bus. Per current guidance, no more than 50 individuals should be on a bus at one time.

DISMISSAL

As with arrival, schools will utilize as many exterior entryways as possible and assign classes to exit through only their assigned doorway upon dismissal. Employees will accompany students as they are dismissed.

Parents will be instructed to remain in vehicles instead of congregating outside school exits. Schools should implement procedures to screen student pickups to ensure ongoing safety.

INTERNAL TRAFFIC FLOW

Traffic flow will be designed with the intent of keeping cohorts physically apart throughout the building. Provide physical guides, such as tape on floors or sidewalks and signs on walls, to ensure that staff and students remain at least three to six feet apart in hallways. Depending upon the layout of the school building, consider assigning classes to use specific routes. Principals will carefully think through how students travel through high-traffic areas of the school building, such as the cafeteria, gym, multipurpose room, bathrooms, etc.

Students shall not share lockers. If a school has extra lockers, student lockers in elementary and secondary schools will be spread out by cohort or grade level. Develop a schedule of locker access to mitigate breaking cohorts (e.g., cohorts/grade levels could access lockers at different times if lockers are located in the same hallway).

In the elementary school, passing periods should be avoided. As indicated below, it is recommended that students remain in their grade level classroom instead of traveling to other departmentalized classes.

GENERAL FACILITY CLEANING, HYGIENE, & SHARED SCHOOL SUPPLIES

Schools will follow the building cleaning and disinfection procedures outlined in the guidance from the Catholic Mutual Group and in the ISBE/ IDPH's *Transition Joint Guidance*.

Sharing of school supplies such as pencils, markers and art supplies will be eliminated. Students shall maintain their school supplies in individually labeled containers, cubbies, desks, classrooms, or book bags. Shared equipment, such as one-to-one devices, will be used by as few children as possible and will be cleaned and disinfected before use by another student.

All rooms will have access to either a sink and soap in the classroom or in a bathroom for frequent hand washing and/or have access to hand sanitizer that contains at least 60 percent alcohol.

Spray bottles of cleaning disinfectant will be readily available in each classroom and shared spaces for use throughout the day. Common surfaces in shared spaces (e.g. office, bathrooms, stair handrails, etc.) will be cleaned multiple times per day.

Installing physical barriers, such as sneeze guards and partitions in shared areas, where it is difficult for individuals to remain at least three to six feet apart (e.g. main office desk), may be considered.

Food and drink will not be shared (including student snacks and lunches). Individually wrapped birthday treats may be shared during lunchtime.

Drinking fountains will *only* be used to fill reusable water bottles. Signs will be placed on water fountains indicating their sole use is for refilling water bottles.

When practical, increase the circulation of outdoor air as much as possible by opening windows and inside doors. Do not open windows and doors if doing so poses a safety or health risk to students (e.g., risk of falling, triggering of asthma symptoms, etc.).

When possible, interior doors will be kept open to eliminate the need to use door handles. Be mindful of fire code and student safety when determining whether to keep internal doors open.

For the 2021-2022 school year, schools shall discontinue the use of perfect attendance awards.

CORE CLASSROOMS – REMAINING WITHIN COHORT OR CLASSROOM SUBJECT

Arrange desks in rows facing the same direction and provide three feet distance. If tables are used instead of desks, attempt to spread out students at tables. Consider taping off tables to separate student workspace.

Frequently clean and disinfect high-touch surfaces daily, including desks and door handles.

Shared classroom spaces, such as science labs, should be cleaned before and after usage by each cohort or classroom. When using the library, students should use hand sanitizer before touching books and afterwards, too.

Students and employees should use hand sanitizer or wash hands with soap after returning to the classroom from any location.

EARLY EDUCATION CONSIDERATIONS

Follow guidelines that apply to core classrooms (see section above).

Classroom supplies may be shared, given the unique educational practices of early education, but limited to *essential use only* and cleaned frequently.

Snacks: Separate students as much as possible (3-6 feet or more). Students may remove masks while eating. Minimize student movement and prevent food sharing. Clean surfaces immediately after snack time.

Naptime (if applicable): Do not permit sharing of cots or bedding. Spread children out as much as possible, and masks may be removed if children are at least three to six feet apart.

DEPARTMENTALIZED CLASSES AND MIXED INSTRUCTIONAL GROUPS

For departmentalized schedules (e.g. junior high and high school programs), students will try to remain in their classroom for all core subjects.

Some elementary schools mix students from various grades/classes when utilizing leveled math classes or

Title I reading intervention; however, schools should consider avoiding such mixing when possible and use technology to supplement instruction. At the very least, efforts will be made for students to wear masks and socially distance.

SPECIALS' CLASSES

Whenever possible, specials classes (i.e., art, music, drama, foreign language, STEM, health, etc.) should be held in each cohort's grade level classroom or in the secondary school assigned classroom. Elementary school specials' teachers should try and go to the students, rather than students to the teacher. Specials' teachers will observe distancing in the cohort.

If a shared classroom is used for specials' classes, such as a computer lab or library, the area will be thoroughly cleaned before being used by another cohort.

Specials' teachers will minimize shared supplies (e.g. art supplies). In any case, supplies will be cleaned between each use particularly when used by different cohorts or different grade levels as in the high school.

Music classes will try to avoid asking students to play woodwinds, brass instruments, and recorders, in order to minimize risk of cross contamination *unless* social distancing can be maintained (*more information on band below*).

Whenever possible, move classes outside, especially physical education classes.

Please note: offering and scheduling specials' instruction is *at the discretion* of the pastor, chaplain and principal during the pandemic.

DRIVER'S EDUCATION BEHIND-THE-WHEEL

In order to provide behind-the-wheel training to students in driver's education in compliance with all Secretary of State and IDPH safety requirements, the following procedures must be followed:

- Only two students and one instructor per vehicle.
- Masks must be worn.
- Eating and drinking are prohibited in the vehicle.
- Windows must be open whenever possible.
- Do not make any unnecessary stops during the training.
- Complete hand hygiene with soap & water or hand sanitizer, before and after driving.
- Clean and disinfect the steering wheel, door handles, seat belt fastener, controls/dials, keys, etc. in between each behind-the-wheel session.
- Conduct regular routine cleaning and disinfecting of the seats.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION, GYMNASIUMS, AND LOCKER ROOMS

Physical activity can support students' overall health and help reduce stress and anxiety. Whenever feasible and weather permitting, our schools will select outdoor PE activities that allow physical distancing. If physical education must be taught inside, social distance between participants will be observed. Hand shaking, high fives, or other physical contact is prohibited.

Schools must consider eliminating the need for use of locker rooms, as well as allowing students to participate in activities without changing clothing. Shoe changes can be done prior to arrival in PE. Lockers will not be shared, and showers will not be required for activities.

Especially in our secondary schools, the use of shared equipment is not recommended. Any shared equipment must be cleaned between each student use, and it will be disinfected at the end of each class. Fitness center equipment, such as treadmills, elliptical machines, stationary bicycles, weights, etc., will be cleaned and sanitized before and after each class. Focus will be on frequently touched surfaces, such as keypads, hand weights, handles, etc. Maintaining 3 foot distance between participants may include using only every other treadmill/bicycle or installing dividers between each machine or equipment piece. Students and employees will perform hand hygiene at the start and end of each class period or when hands are visibly dirty. Students will also perform hand hygiene after the use of each piece of equipment.

OTHER PROGRAMS

All other programs will be reviewed for feasibility. These programs will be adjusted as needed to apply protection measures while fulfilling any grant or educational requirements.

All athletic and extra-curricular activities will follow the most current IDPH/ISBE guidelines and guidelines provided by IESA and IHSA.

STUDENTS WITH ACCOMMODATIONS

All students attending in-person learning will continue to have access to their individual service plans with accommodations.

TECHNOLOGY DEVICES & WEB ACCESS

A device and web access will be required for both in-person and remote learning. For remote learning, parents will need to maintain this device and web access in their homes for student access to lessons, personalized learning, and assignment retrieval. In the event of a COVID-19 related closure, paper packets may be made available as needed. Our schools will make every effort to ensure that all students in grades

K-12 will have access to a device and will work with families that have limited or no Internet access at home.

Diocesan school policies for acceptable use with technology will be implemented. If a family leaves our diocesan school, all school property must be returned to the school.

BATHROOMS

Try to restrict bathroom use to three students or fewer, if possible. Students will wear masks and try to remain socially distant while in bathrooms.

Schools will post signage on bathrooms indicating that no more than three students (*whenever possible*) may be present at a time.

If a school has multiple bathrooms, classes will be assigned to use specific bathrooms at elementary schools instead of allowing students to choose.

MAIN OFFICE AND STAFF WORKROOM

Consideration should be given to install physical barriers, such as sneeze guards, in the main office counter or desk area in diocesan schools.

Spread out seating in the main office to ensure distancing. Eliminate seating when distancing is not possible.

Use tape on the office floor to direct traffic flow and manage any lines, ensuring proper distancing is followed.

Clean common surfaces multiple times per day, such as counters, desks, doorknobs, copy machines, etc.

Schedule parent, student and teacher meetings virtually, if possible. If face-to-face meetings are required, meet in large open areas instead of more confined spaces (such as the principal's office).

LUNCH

Consider eating lunch in classrooms to minimize the risk of cross contamination. Lunches may be delivered to the classrooms to avoid having students pick up lunches in the cafeteria.

If students pick up lunches in the cafeteria, only one cohort or classroom should pick up lunch at a time and social distancing will be maintained.

Students will wash their hands or apply hand sanitizer before and after eating.

Surfaces used for lunch should be disinfected after eating.

If using the cafeteria, the cafeteria will be cleaned and sanitized between uses. No more than 50 students (or following the most current IDPH/ISBE guidance) should utilize the cafeteria at one time. Only cohorts should sit within the same area and maintain social distancing.

Try to use disposable food service items (e.g., utensils, dishes) and non-disposable food service items should be handled with gloves and washed with dish soap and hot water or in a dishwasher per IDPH and ISBE guidance. Hands shall be washed after removing gloves or after directly handling used food service items.

With varying elementary and secondary school sizes, the pastor/chaplain and principal will determine the most efficient way for students to eat lunch with the goal of always trying to minimize risk for hygiene and safety.

RECESS

Recess in elementary schools will be scheduled with cohorts to decrease intermingling with other cohorts in order to minimize cross contamination.

Recess equipment, if not assigned to a specific cohort but used by multiple cohorts, will be cleaned between cohorts' usage. If using playground equipment (e.g., slides, swings, etc.), try to schedule for only a single cohort to use each day; thus, playground equipment will only have to be cleaned once a day versus several times a day.

SCHOOL MEETINGS

In the elementary school, with the exception of the grade level classroom teacher and perhaps an instructional aide assigned to the classroom, all other teachers and staff are considered "outside" a cohort.

Administrators, front office staff, specials' teachers, cafeteria, custodial and maintenance personnel, etc., will continue to practice social distancing when around others in the school building.

Faculty meetings, professional development and other teacher/staff activities, parent conferences, etc., can meet, but with social distancing. Masking is each individual choice.

MEDICAL CARE FOR STUDENTS

Schools will provide ongoing medical care as described in the school's handbook policies. This includes the authorization to administer approved medications, prescriptions, and basic first aid (with the exception of nebulizer treatments, which should not be administered at school).

Staff should wear gloves and masks when providing medical care for students.

Office staff or nurses that assist with medical care should document when a student has symptoms associated with COVID19 which will require the student to go home once a parent/guardian or designate has been contacted.

VISITORS AND VOLUNTEERS

Visitors and volunteers will have extremely limited access to the school building during the pandemic including events such as Grandparents' Day, etc. Parents will be limited to the main office only.

When volunteers are needed to assist under certain circumstances, the principal shall approve and ensure that health and safety protocols are followed.

The school office will keep accurate records of all visitors and volunteers, including the individual's reason for the visit, contact information and all locations visited in case contact tracing is needed.

STUDENT TRAVEL

Students will self-quarantine after traveling to another country or to another state that is experiencing COVID-19 outbreaks, as determined by the most current guidance from the Governor of Illinois, IDPH/ISBE, and CDC.

Parents/students should inform schools immediately if they display COVID-19 symptoms during the self-quarantine period. Schools should follow the IDPH guidance on travel.

INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS

International students will remain in their American residence for at least two weeks following travel to and from their country of origin and will be allowed to complete work remotely while at home.

Chaperone families and/or international students will inform schools immediately if anyone in the home displays COVID-19 symptoms during the quarantine period. Schools will follow IDPH guidance.

SHARING BUILDING SPACE

Parish ministries (such as Religious Education classes) and "external groups" (e.g., Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts, etc.) will be asked to use any vacant or unused instructional space. The pastor/chaplain and principal shall grant access to these required areas with the stipulation that the areas are thoroughly sanitized and disinfected before and after usage by the external groups.

SCHOOL and OUTSIDE REQUESTS for RETREATS

TEC and Koinonia retreats will not be allowed in school buildings during the pandemic. In regard to school retreats, consideration should be given to scheduling any fall retreat to the spring semester. Regardless, when scheduling retreats, schools will follow the guidelines of social distancing, wearing masks, hand washing, and gathering in groups with the number of people as determined by the most recent CDC, ISBE/IDPH guidance.

SPECIAL EVENTS (HOLY MASSES, ADORATION, ASSEMBLIES, FIELD TRIPS, ETC.)

Large group gatherings of special events (i.e., back-to-school information nights, etc.) should be avoided or conducted virtually pending the number of people who can gather safely in one place, as determined by the most recent CDC, ISBE/IDPH guidance, and the Governor of Illinois.

Field trips are prohibited during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Principals will work with their pastor or chaplain to determine the scheduling of school masses and the other sacraments within the parish church building following the IDPH guidance for gatherings of religious groups. Social distancing will be observed.

Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament may be allowed in the school or parish church following the above mentioned guidelines of the CDC, IDPH/ISBE, and Governor of Illinois regarding the number of people who can be in a large gathering at one time for a religious group. Social distancing will be practiced. Visitors will not be allowed in the buildings during school-scheduled times for Adoration in order to minimize the risk of cross contamination. Only school employees and students may be in attendance for Adoration if it is scheduled during the school day and is a part of the school's *Spiritual Development Plan* for ongoing faith formation.

EMERGENCY DRILLS

Emergency drills in all diocesan schools will be conducted per ISBE requirements. Principals should contact their local fire department and law enforcement agency to discuss scheduling of fire and armed intruder drills during the pandemic.

EXTENDED CARE (BEFORE- AND AFTER-SCHOOL CARE)

Schools will try to keep student cohorts separate and to use larger multipurpose rooms, cafeterias, libraries, gyms, etc. to maximize social distancing and floor space. This guidance applies to secondary schools as well.

Sharing any supplies, games, or toys will not be allowed.

Extended care rooms or areas must be cleaned before and after each extended care usage.

EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

Principals will use their best judgment in determining whether extracurricular activities can be scheduled safely in the school setting. While schools are still under the pandemic, it may be best to cancel or postpone an extracurricular activity or schedule it virtually. School health and safety requirements will be followed, including social distancing, masks, PPE, and limiting the number of individuals in one space per IDPH/ISBE and the Governor of Illinois' *Restore Illinois* 5 phase reopening plan. Regulations published by IESA and IHSA concerning school events and activities will be followed.

Band: Large group practices (more than 15 students) may be conducted virtually or in a large space (gym, multipurpose room, cafeteria or outside in order for social distancing to be maintained).

Small group practices (involving 15 or fewer students) may be scheduled in the band/music room with social distancing. Sharing a musical instrument (i.e., drums) is discouraged, but at the very least, will be cleaned between every student use.

Practices for wind instruments (brass and woodwinds) may be conducted virtually, but if in person, 6 feet of social distancing is required.

Choir, Drama/School Play, Christmas Programs: These programs will be able to take place while following the large group gathering guidance from IDPH/ISBE, Restore Illinois, IESA and IHSA guidelines for practices and performances.

Other Activities (e.g. academic clubs, debate, chess, etc.): Consider conducting activities virtually. If this is not possible and face-to-face meetings are necessary, social distancing will be maintained. If the activity involves sharing a space (particularly within a grade level class or high school activity), the space will be cleaned and disinfected before and after the activity's use. If it is an IESA- or IHSA-sponsored event, principals will also review and follow these organizations' guidelines during the pandemic.

INFECTION PROTOCOL

PREPARING FOR WHEN A STUDENT OR STAFF MEMBER BECOMES SICK

Any individual who tests positive for COVID-19 or who shows any signs or symptoms of illness must stay home. In accordance with state and federal guidance, school community members who are sick should not return to school until they have met criteria to return. CDC and IDPH guidelines for school community members who are suspected of having COVID-19, whether they were tested or not, state that 72 hours must elapse from resolution of fever without fever reducing medication and 10 days must pass after symptoms first appeared.

Individuals who did not have **close contact (defined as with or without a mask, within six feet, for more than fifteen minutes)** with the person who is sick may continue to remain at school.

Those who had close contact with someone who tested positive for COVID-19, or is suspected of having it, should isolate at home and monitor for symptoms for 14 days.

PROTOCOL

If any student, employee or volunteer is COVID19 positive and it is reported to the diocesan school, principals will immediately contact the local public health department and follow their protocol. As a matter of record, principals shall also copy the Superintendent of Catholic Schools on any report given to local public health department officials.

Furthermore, the local public health department officials will provide guidance to the diocesan school principal for gathering information of all teachers, staff, or students who have been in direct,

close contact with a COVID19 positive person while at school. This information is collected for the purposes of contact tracing in the event of a world-wide pandemic as in the case of COVID19.

The Illinois Department of Public Health (IDPH) has provided the most recent **COVID-19**

EXCLUSION

GUIDANCE *Decision Tree for Symptomatic Individuals in Pre-K, K-12 Schools and Day Care Programs* (08.20.2020) which has been provided to assist principals with determining the variables associated with COVID-19 and schools.

EMPLOYEE QUARANTINES: SICK DAYS

The Office of Catholic Schools is working with the Chancellor/Diocesan Attorney for further direction regarding employment and COVID19 cases as current regulations are changing and/or being modified continually with the unpredictability of the virus. Therefore, principals should contact the Superintendent of Schools for guidance.

VIRTUAL ACADEMY

Remote learning will not be offered as an alternative to in-class instruction in diocese schools for the 2021 – 2022 school year.

Exception would be: 1) if positivity rates are such a level that an individual classroom or an entire school must close as a mitigation strategy; or, 2) if a student is deemed “medically fragile”. In regard to the latter, a parent or guardian may petition the school with professional documentation from a licensed physician that supports a child’s “medically fragile” status. At that point, it will become a site-based decision of the pastor/chaplain and principal to provide a remote-learning option based upon the school’s resources to reasonably accommodate such a request.

It is also important to note that remote learning could possibly not be in the same format as in the 2020-2021 school year. It will, most likely, be a combination of live streaming, recorded lessons, and assigned tasks.

Finally, please note: Tuition will **not** be reduced or waived depending on the pandemic situation and the method of education provided to students to maintain safety. There will be no refunds unless a family terminates their enrollment with the school and then the school’s tuition refund policy, as published in the school handbook, would apply.

RESOURCES

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/>
- <https://www.pjstar.com/news/20200718/peoria-pediatrician-weighs-in-on-controversy-back-to-school-during-covid-19>

Illinois State Board of Education/Illinois Department of Public Health

- <https://www.isbe.net/Documents/Part-3-Transition-Planning-Phase-4.pdf>

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

- <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/preventgetting-sick/prevention.html>
- <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/hcp/return-to-work.html>
- <https://www.washingtonpost.com/health/2020/07/21/how-long-should-you-isolate-if-you-test-positive-coronavirus-new-cdc-guidance-says-10-days-not-14/>

Catholic Mutual Group

- <https://www.catholicmutual.org>

