

SMS Catholic Schools Onward

Best Practices and New Opportunities as We Move Forward

Guidance and Procedures



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Guidance and Procedures

Introduction

This document will provide information regarding the plan to return to Brick and Mortar learning for the 2021-2022 school year. Before we discuss the specific aspects of the plan, let's start with an introduction to several of the key foundational premises that the plan is built upon. The principles listed below will allow us to remain open and provide full time in-person instruction.

Partnership

Catholic elementary schools are inherently a partnership between the parent and the school. This is never more important than at this time and an even greater partnership is now needed. It is our goal to open up this school year and to remain open. This cannot be possible unless the school and the parents agree to the importance of monitoring your child's health on a daily basis. Most importantly, this means that children who are experiencing symptoms – such as fever, chills, cough, shortness of breath or difficulty breathing, fatigue, muscle or body aches, headache, new loss of taste or smell, sore throat, congestion or runny nose, nausea or vomiting, diarrhea, parents need to keep their child home until medically cleared to return to school. With parental cooperation in this matter, we will be able to keep the schools open and safe.

Social distancing

Social distancing is also a fundamental practice in all of our procedures of operations. New guidance suggests that three feet or the greatest extend possible is sufficient. Social distancing is deliberately increasing the physical space between people to avoid spreading illness. Keeping your distance from others lessens your chances of catching COVID-19.

Strategic use of masks

Masks are highly recommended for use in schools. Depending on the level of COVID in the community, masking will be either mandated or optional.

Cleaning

Increased cleaning will continue of common areas and highly used features such as door knobs, handrails, and counters. Children are encouraged to bring their own water bottles to school, as common water fountains will not be in use. With this enhanced cleaning, a safer environment can be established.

Handwashing

Hand sterilization is implemented. The use of hand sanitation and social distancing is recommended by the CDC and other health agencies to help control the spread of any viruses and also manage any possible outbreaks.

Monitoring health

Every day, parents are primarily responsible for monitoring the health of their children. Teachers will be reminded to check the health of their students during a common activity. Additionally, the school will implement random temperature monitoring.

Virtual Learning

At this time, virtual learning is not an option.

Recommended Layered Mitigation Practices for Schools

Level of Transmission	LOW	MODERATE	SUBSTANTIAL	HIGH
Criteria for level	Established by County Health Department or CDC (Depending on Location)	Established by County Health Department or CDC (Depending on Location)	Established by County Health Department or CDC (Depending on Location)	Established by County Health Department or CDC (Depending on Location)
Description of mitigation practices	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Masks would be optional. Social distancing: Covid tracking: Cleaning and sanitizing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Masks would be highly recommended, but parents could use the waiver. Daily health monitoring: Social distancing: Covid tracking: Cleaning and sanitizing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Masks would be mandated Daily health monitoring: Social distancing: Covid tracking: Cleaning and sanitizing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Masks would be mandated Modified cohorting would be in place Daily health monitoring Social distancing: Covid tracking: Cleaning and sanitizing

Building Operations

Daily monitoring of Health

Introduction

To provide the healthiest environment possible for staff and students, schools should engage with parents to screen children for COVID symptoms prior to coming to school. Schools should reinforce the need to not send children to school that are experiencing the following symptoms.

- Fever or chills
- Cough
- Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing
- Fatigue
- Muscle or body aches
- Headache
- New loss of taste or smell

- Sore throat
- Congestion or runny nose
- Nausea or vomiting
- Diarrhea

As we learn about the disease, we may need to alter the list by adding or subtracting symptoms.

This daily monitoring may take place in a number of methods. The schools should decide what method best meets their specific and unique needs and infrastructure. Schools should also monitor the health of staff and students by tracking student's and staff's absenteeism. Any confirmed cases should be reported to the health department and to the Office of Catholic Education.

Lunch

Introduction

Lunch in school serves multiple purposes, it is a time to replenish and nourish as well as a time to socialize and get a brain break. It is important to provide all of these goals and keep children safe.

Process

1. Students will wash hands before lunch.
2. The table and desks will be wiped down before and after each meal.
3. Shared meals are discouraged.
4. Students will wash hands after lunch.
5. Once we move to the auditorium for lunch, students will be spaced as much as possible.
6. During levels of high COVID transmission, students may be placed in cohorts.

Recess

Introduction

Recess is an important part of a child's school day. A safe and healthy recess promotes time to develop socially, emotionally, physically, and academically.

During recess, students learn and practice important social and emotional skills, such as conflict resolution, decision-making, compromise, and self-regulation. Additionally, recess provides a needed brain break and facilitates the learning process. With this in mind, the following procedures will be put in place ensuring our students have a safe recess.

Philosophy

To the best extent possible, recess will continue applying safe physical contact of equipment and social distancing. The term "social distancing" refers to measures being taken to restrict where and when people can gather in order to stop or slow the spread of infectious disease. In general, six feet of separation is the distance that should be kept between people interacting within their peers. Games that utilize physical and social activities, yet limit physical contact will be played.

Process

1. Students will go to recess using the procedures established in school operations regarding movement between the building.
2. Students will wash/sterilize their hands before going to recess and before returning to class.
3. Students will not need to wear mask while at recess.

4. Grades can mix with other class divisions during recess.
5. Equipment will be wiped down to the greatest extent possible.
6. Students will wash/sterilize their hands before returning to class.
7. Students will not need to be in Cohorts unless in the High Transmission Level Phase as established by the authorities.
8. Students will not need to wear masks when recess is outside.

Traveling Within the Building

Introduction

Movement about the building is essential and cannot be eliminated. Times will be staggered to allow for travel throughout the building while keeping the students and staff safe especially during the High Transmission Level Phase as established by the authorities.

Philosophy

Students need to travel from the bus, to their classroom, to the lavatory and other essential areas. The strategic use of masks and social distancing will be part of this travel.

Process

- The hall will be split so students will travel in one direction through the hallway keeping travel restricted on each side of the hall to one direction.
- A schedule will be developed that takes in consideration the movement of classrooms around the building.
- Planned travel, such as to recess, will be planned so several classrooms are not in the hallway simultaneously.
- The door will be held open during the change of classes to avoid unnecessary touching by students.

St. Raphael Room

Introduction

When students are experiencing discomfort or potential symptoms of COVID, they will be removed to a place where they are isolated from others with enough room that several students could sit in the room and be six feet apart.

Philosophy

The concept is to provide a safe supervised staging area where students can wait until they can get transportation from the school.

Process

- We have established an area that is supervised and can fit multiple students that can be social distanced – St. Raphael Room – across from the Health Office.
- Provide masks to all who enter the room.
- Sanitize objects touched after each use.
- Provide the room monitor disposable gloves.
- Keep in the room:
 - Disposable paper towels
 - Tissues

- Waste container with plastic liner
- Alcohol-based hand sanitizer containing at least 60% alcohol
- Hard-surface disinfectant

A detailed step-by-step description (provided by the School District of Philadelphia) is included at the end of this document.

Classroom Operations

Classroom Set-Up

Introduction

The organization of the classroom is important in supporting the academic progress of students. Classroom space provides an environment that allows teachers and students to interact comfortably and safely. With this in mind careful consideration has been given to the strategic placement of furniture, learning centers, and materials in order to optimize student learning, reduce distractions and keep children safe.

Philosophy

A foundational premise when designing a safe classroom environment is the concept of maintaining social distancing to the greatest extent possible. The use of social distancing is recommended by the CDC and other health agencies to help control the spread of any viruses and also manage any possible outbreaks.

Process

- We have removed any non-essential furniture, materials and equipment that is not needed and stored them in a place outside of the room.
- Desks all face in the same direction.
- Desks have been placed 3 feet from the center of each desk to the center of the next desk or to the greatest extent possible.
- All throw rugs and roll-up carpets have been removed from room.
- In order to provide another layer of protection, desk shields will be provided to any student whose parents have so requested.

Materials Within the Classroom

Introduction

The organization of the classroom is important in supporting the academic progress of students. The use of a variety of materials is essential for learning. This includes, book, writing instruments, and materials for special area subjects.

Philosophy

A foundational premise when designing a safe classroom environment are the concepts of social distancing and frequent cleaning. The use of these practices is recommended by the CDC and other health agencies to help control the spread of any viruses and also manage any possible outbreaks.

Process

1. Classrooms have eliminated, when possible, the use of shared materials.
2. When materials must be shared, cleaning in between uses is essential.
 - a. Procedures to wipe down before and after every use are established in each classroom.
 - b. We will remind children to wash their hands after using a shared item.
3. If students travel to a room, an area and place will be established for the traveling student to store items away from being used by others.

Playbook: Guidance for Dealing with cases or suspected cases of COVID-19

Although the CDC no longer expects schools to screen students or staff, St. Matthew School will continue to monitor their health through the daily taking of temperature and health surveys.

If our school has cases of COVID-19, local health officials will help identify those individuals and follow up on next steps.

Below is some specific guidance related to situations involving the school, community and COVID-19.

If a staff member or volunteer has a confirmed case of COVID-19

1. Notify the local health officials – ask for guidance.
2. After speaking with the health department and discussing the situation related to the exposure, implement the plan directed from the health department on who needs to be quarantined.
3. Communicate to staff and families that there was a confirmed case – without using a name or identifying information of the person(s) involved.
4. During the initial 2 to 5-day period, evaluate if any other related cases were identified and make a decision to extend or end the classroom dismissal.
5. The staff/volunteer can return based on the guidance from the health department.

If a student has a confirmed case of COVID-19

1. Notify the local health officials – ask for guidance.
2. After speaking with the health department and discussing the situation related to the exposure, implement the plan directed from the health department on who needs to be quarantined.
3. Communicate to staff and families that there was a confirmed case – without using a name or identifying information of the person(s) involved.
4. Close off the potentially infected, if recommended to do so by the health department.

If a student or staff has a suspected case of COVID-19 or is demonstrating symptoms.

1. Immediately separate staff and children with COVID-19 symptoms (such as fever, cough, or shortness of breath) at the school. Individuals who are sick should go home or to a healthcare facility depending on how severe their symptoms are. CDC guidance for caring for oneself and others who are sick should be followed.
2. Hopefully our school will be equipped and the parents have given permission, a COVID test will be administered
3. We have provided an isolation room.
4. Call for home transportation, if necessary.

5. The student or staff can return based on the guidance from the health department
6. Report the case to the Archdiocesan Tracker: <https://forms.gle/6HmYbx6y1BxNUKHk8>

Response flowchart

Situation	Unvaccinated Students	Unvaccinated Student wearing a mask	Vaccinated student
Wearing masks	Required to wear a mask	Required to wear a mask	Required to wear a mask
Close contact with a covid case	Will need to follow quarantine procedures (below)	Will not need to quarantine	Will not need to quarantine
Test positive for Covid	Will quarantine for 10 day	Will quarantine for 10 day	Will quarantine for 10 day

Define quarantine procedures

A child that is required to follow quarantine procedures will need to quarantine for a minimum of five days. At the five days point a child can:

- Get a COVID test, if negative can return after 7 days.
- Not get a test and return after 10 days.

Frequently Asked Questions Regarding Specific Situations

Q: If a student, teacher or staff member has been vaccinated, but comes in close contact with COVID (indoors or outdoors) do they have to quarantine? If so, how long? And do they need to get a COVID negative test result to return to school? If so, when should they get a COVID test?

A: The current recommendation per the CDC and HAN 583 is if a fully vaccinated person is exposed to someone with COVID-19, they do not need to quarantine. However, they should:

- Get tested 2-5 days after exposure, even if they don't have symptoms.
- Wear a mask indoors in public for 14 days following exposure or until their test results are negative.
- Isolate for 10 days if their test result is positive.

If someone is fully vaccinated and develops COVID-like symptoms, they should isolate and be tested for COVID. However, keep in mind that the CDC has provided an exclusion to the close contact definition for students who were within 3 to 6 feet of an infected student where:

- Both students were engaged in consistent and correct use of well-fitting face masks.
- Other K-12 school prevention strategies (such as universal and correct mask use, physical distancing, and increased ventilation) were in place in the K-12 setting.

This exception does not apply to teachers, staff or other adults in the indoor classroom setting.

Q: Regarding outdoor classes or sports, do students have to wear a mask regardless of their vaccination status?

A: Mask use is strongly recommended indoors for all individuals, regardless of their vaccination status in the K-12 setting. When transmission rate has been designated as “substantial” or “high”, masks are mandated.

Q: When a child who is wearing a mask and is not vaccinated is in close contact, do they need to quarantine?

A: The CDC guidance says “No”. As long as the students are social distancing and wearing a mask they will not have to quarantine if they come in close contact with someone that has COVID. They would have to get a test if they start showing signs of being sick and then they would have to quarantine. Adults would still have to quarantine.

Catholic Identity

Introduction

Excellence in education is characterized by having a strong curriculum, student engagement, utilizing quality instructional methods, making good use of data and regular communication with parents and stakeholders. What is at the heart of learning in a Catholic school is the inclusion of faith and Catholic identity in all we do.

Philosophy

Catholic schools have a two-fold charge: providing an education that is academically excellent and one that is deeply rooted in Catholic Identity. The challenge, then, is to ensure that the education that is delivered (no matter what the mode of delivery) meets this standard.

Process

1. There is a level of intentionality across all grade levels and all subject matter that course content is intentionally Catholic.
2. St. Matthew will continue to follow the clergy’s office recommendation regarding school Masses in relation to the appropriate social distancing.
 - o Attendance of parents and general community at the school liturgies may have to be suspended depending on local guidelines. If the Mass is live-streamed, parents and families will be invited to attend.
 - o Because of social distance, part of the school may attend the Mass and the rest of the school live streaming the Mass to make a spiritual Communion.
3. We will provide opportunities for daily prayer in a community.
4. We will continue to support and make modifications to other faith-based activities that are important in the life of the school (i.e., retreats, prayer services).
5. Increase opportunities for cross-grade faith sharing using virtual means (i.e., prayer buddies meeting virtually).
6. We begin all lessons with prayer, including soliciting prayer intentions from students.
7. Connect the current events with a Catholic perspective (using the tenets of Catholic Social Teaching, the Virtues, etc.) as a framework to support understanding.

8. We are graced with the presence of our pastor, Fr. Welsh, in both formal and informal classroom settings.
9. Promote service-learning experiences and activities.
10. Find opportunities in the current situation that would lend themselves to a community response (acknowledgements and prayers for police, first responders, holding food drives, etc.).
11. Maintain Catholic Identity in the school environment:
 - Every classroom has a prayer corner, crucifix, statues, bulletin boards reflecting faith values.
 - Restore practices of having a class patron
 - Keep in focus the Standards for Ministerial Behavior

The Prayer of Pope Francis during the Coronavirus

Lord, may you bless the world, give health to our bodies and comfort our hearts. You ask us not to be afraid. Yet our faith is weak and we are fearful. But you, Lord, will not leave us at the mercy of the storm. Tell us again: "Do not be afraid" (Mt 28:5). And we, together with Peter, "cast all our anxieties onto you, for you care about us" (1 Pet 5:7). Amen.

CARES, Early Childhood, Pre-K

CARES

Introduction

It is integral for our school to provide a CARES program especially during the current circumstances. For some of our students this will be their first re-entry into the school setting. CARES is an offshoot of the regular school day; thus, all procedures in place for the school will be adhered to during the CARES program. CARES programs are considered by the state to be Child Care programs; our CARES program holds a child care license from DHS.

Philosophy

It is paramount that we provide a safe, healthy and sanitized environment for those students entrusted to our care before and after regular school hours. It is important to engage these students in a social setting which they have not experienced in months and to provide a pleasant atmosphere for them. We are the protectors and providers for these students during the hours they are entrusted to us.

Social and safe-distancing practices will be observed as much as possible. When able students will be kept with the same adult monitor in the program.

1. Outside visitors are not allowed to enter the area where the CARES program is being held. Children should be met at the school door both entering and leaving the building.
2. Students are responsible for providing their own snack and beverage during their time in CARES. There will be no snack sharing.
3. All employees and volunteers (including teens) will follow the same health checklist practices as school employees.
4. All operational guidelines put into place in the school (e.g., movement through the building, recess, etc.) are to be practiced during CARES sessions.

5. Dismissal at the end of the school day limits CARES students to vulnerability. (i.e. CARES students will be called to the CARES room after all other lines are dismissed.)
6. Any area used by the CARES students and also used during the school day, will be sanitized prior to student entry for the CARES program.
7. Materials used by CARES students on a regular basis are sanitized daily.
8. Monitored hand washing and sanitizing will be done on a regular basis.
9. Follow the Playbook recommendations for any suspected illness.
10. The CARES program will comply with any emergency actions and resulting decisions that occur during the school day.
11. A mobile phone needs is available to CARES personnel for communications purposes in the event a situation arises during the CARES session.

Checklist

St. Matthew CARES program will:

- Maintain accurate records for CARES students with easy access to the program director. This includes attendance records.
- Establish a schedule and routine limiting the crossover of groups during CARES sessions.
- In keeping with Catholic Identity practices, begin every CARES session with a prayer.
- Establish a safe place for the students' materials and personal belongings such as schoolbags, hats, gloves, lunch boxes and jackets that provides safe distancing from other student belongings.
- Ensure that students are not sharing materials. (e.g., crayons, pencils, markers).
- Provide opportunities for planned activities for student engagement.
- Apprise all employees of:
 - The Diocesan Standards for CARES and identified in the CARES Handbook.
 - The Standards put in place by the CSO Task Force.
 - The Standards for Ministerial Behavior.
 - Childcare Standards regulated by the Department of Human Services.
- Apprise any person serving as a substitute for a CARES employee of the standards identified above and agree to adhere to them.
- Provide proper notification to a CARES designee of students who will be missing (e.g. left school early) or who have a special circumstance (e.g. crutches) during a CARES session.
- Keep in focus the Standards for Ministerial Behavior.

Early Childhood / Pre-K

Introduction

The need for careful strategic planning has become a reality in the “new-normal” circumstances including the pandemic-related quarantines. Physical presence in the classroom allows time for students to develop spiritually, socially, emotionally, physically, and academically. Care needs to be

taken so that they are safe and learning in a healthy environment. This guidance is for situations in which students below the first grade are enrolled.

Philosophy

Students and their families should be provided with safe, quality, Catholic childcare in our schools and Early Learning Centers. Educators need to nurture a sense of community, curiosity and a love of learning at these beginning levels. Freedom from anxiety and a sense of happiness should permeate the students' learning experience.

Process

St. Matthew Pre-K Director will:

1. Set as a goal social, physical and emotional well-being.
2. Create a well-defined plan and communicate it to parents/guardians so they know what to expect:
 - Entrance and exit processes.
 - Process for when a child becomes ill during school.
3. Establish a regular routine for cleaning and sanitizing beyond the usual procedures.
4. Regularly communicate with parents/guardians. Emphasize to the parents that much of what will be done, we already do on a regular basis (cleaning, sanitizing children's toys, etc.) However, we will be taking extra precautions.
5. Require parents to notify the school immediately if their child has been exposed to COVID or is diagnosed with COVID
6. Request health checks be done at home; the staff will follow protocols established at school regarding daily health monitoring.
7. Follow the directives established by the CSO task force in all other areas—building management, Catholic Identity, Trauma, CARES, etc.
8. Keep in focus the Standards for Ministerial Behavior.

Checklist

- Obtain the necessary supplies—hand sanitizers, paper towels, tissues.
- Spray carpets with a sanitizer at the end of the day. Vacuum in the morning.
- Frequently used toys will be cleaned daily.