



ST. BARTHOLOMEW SCHOOL
THE ROAD FORWARD PLAN
IN RESPONSE TO COVID-19

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Principal
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School Reopening Taskforce

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Thank you to the School Reopening Taskforce for your input, expertise, and commitment to St. Bartholomew School so that we may safely reopen and continue to offer an outstanding Catholic education during the pandemic.

Dear Parents and Guardians,

I want to thank you for your tremendous support of the mission of St. Bartholomew School and for all your prayers during this time. We had a safe and successful 2020-2021 school year and I am grateful for the cooperation of our parents/guardians, students, and staff. As we look forward to the 2021-2022 school year, I would like to invite all of us to share in this prayerful reflection.

Dear Lord,

As COVID-19 affects our world, we continue to pray. We invite you into our hearts, Lord, hearts that have so much on them right now. Amidst our fear, disappointment, confusion, uncertainty, grief, anger, and frustration, we invite you in, Lord. May we be given a peace and understanding of cancellations and social distancing rules. May we act with humility to not just preserve our safety and health, but to look beyond ourselves. May we be alert to the ways we may help those around us and give us the grace to step forward without hesitation to be men and women for and with others, for your greater glory. Come to our aid, Lord. Open our ears to hear your voice in these troubled times. May we listen and be prudent and may we draw ever closer to you. Amen.

It is in the spirit of our mission: *To love, educate, and inspire our children to live the teachings of Jesus Christ*, that our task force has worked tirelessly on this plan to welcome our students back to school in a safe and prudent manner. I am looking forward to seeing you soon.

God bless you,
Mrs. Ann Wierzbicki, R.N., M.A.E./Ed.S.
Principal

INTRODUCTION

We have created this plan to aid in navigating the reestablishment of our school where employees, students, and families feel safe and to reduce the impact of COVID-19 conditions upon returning to the school. St. Bartholomew School is providing full-time, in-person instruction to all students with all staff present for the 2021-2022 school year. The guidelines in this plan are based on guidance from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the State of New Jersey Department of Education (NJDOE) document, *The Road Forward*, the New Jersey Department of Health, and The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP). The CDC and AAP have emphasized that "in-person learning is critical for educational and social development of children, as evidence demonstrates that remote learning has been detrimental to the educational attainment of students of all ages and has exacerbated the mental health crisis among children and adolescents." Regular updates will be made to this plan based on information provided at the applicable federal, state, and local agencies. We will continue to monitor the data and our decisions will be guided by science to ensure that we maintain a safe and healthy learning environment.

SOURCES

Center for Disease Control: https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/schools-childcare/schools.html#anchor_1589931942037

New Jersey Department of Education:
<https://www.nj.gov/education/reopening/NJDOETheRoadBack.pdf>

American Academy of Pediatrics: *COVID-19 Planning Considerations: Guidance for School Re-entry*

GENERAL HEALTH AND SAFETY GUIDELINES

A layered approach has been developed to help prevent the spread of COVID-19.

1.1 Vaccination:

Although COVID-19 vaccines are safe, effective, and accessible, not all children are eligible to be vaccinated. Eligible students and staff are encouraged to be vaccinated.

Safe and effective COVID-19 vaccines that are morally permissible for Catholics are currently available for all individuals ages 12 and older. According to the CDC, vaccination is currently the leading public health prevention strategy to end the COVID-19 pandemic. Many members of Catholic school communities have already received a COVID-19 vaccine. Vaccinated individuals will be exempt from quarantine requirements if they are considered a close contact of someone who tests positive for COVID-19. However, vaccination for COVID-19 is not required for Catholic school students in the Diocese of Metuchen. Parents/guardians will be asked to provide vaccination information for their children to the school nurse to aid with quarantine recommendations if they become necessary.

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As per Governor Murphy's Executive Order, anyone working in a school must be vaccinated by October 18, 2021. If an employee chooses not to be vaccinated, that person must undergo COVID-19 testing on a weekly basis.

1.2 **Communication:**

NJDOH provides information on COVID-19 transmission at the regional level, characterizing transmission as low (green), moderate (yellow), high (orange), or very high (red). This information is posted every week on the NJDOH CDS COVID-19 website. The school nurse will communicate with the Local Health Department to establish procedures for Local Health Department notification and response to COVID-19 illness in the school setting (phone: 732-745-3100 Option 1).

1.3 **Masks:**

Wearing masks is an important prevention strategy to help slow the spread of COVID-19, especially when combined with everyday preventive actions and social distancing in public settings. Executive Order #251 by Governor Murphy states the following:

- All public, private, and parochial preschool programs and elementary and secondary schools must maintain a policy regarding mandatory use of face masks by staff, students, and visitors in the indoor portion of the school premises, regardless of vaccination status, except in the following circumstances:
 - ❖ When doing so would inhibit the individual's health, such as when the individual is exposed to extreme heat indoors;
 - ❖ When a student's documented medical condition or disability, as reflected in an Individualized Education Program (IEP) or Educational Plan pursuant to Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, precludes use of a face covering;
 - ❖ When the individual has trouble breathing, is unconscious, incapacitated, or otherwise unable to remove a face mask without assistance;
 - ❖ When the individual is under two years of age;
 - ❖ When the individual is engaged in activity that cannot physically be performed while wearing a mask, such as eating or drinking, or playing a musical instrument that would be obstructed by a face mask;
 - ❖ When the individual is engaged in high-intensity aerobic or anaerobic activity;
 - ❖ When a student is participating in high-intensity physical activities during a physical education class in a well-ventilated location and able to maintain six feet from all other individuals;
 - ❖ Or when wearing a face mask creates an unsafe condition in which to operate equipment or execute a task.
- This Order shall not impact the obligation of the school to comply with requirements issued by the CDC on masking on school buses.
- This Order shall take effect on August 9, 2021 and shall remain in effect until revoked or modified by the Governor.

Outdoors: In general, people do not need to wear a mask when outdoors. The CDC recommends that people who are fully vaccinated wear a mask in crowded outdoor settings or during activities that involve sustained close contact with other people. Fully vaccinated people might choose to wear a mask in crowded outdoor settings if they or someone in their household is immunocompromised.

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Exceptions to wearing masks will not be made on the basis of personal preference or concerns about negative consequences of wearing masks. If masks are required it will be because the benefits of wearing them outweigh any negative consequences. Please note that vaccinated individuals will also need to wear a mask in school.

The following principles apply to the use of masks in schools:

- Masks and/or barriers do not preclude an individual from being identified as a close contact to a COVID-19 case.
- The most effective fabrics for cloth masks are tightly woven, such as cotton and cotton blends, breathable, and in two or three fabric layers. Masks with exhalation valves or vents, those that use loosely woven fabrics, and ones that do not fit properly are not recommended.
- Masks should be washed after every day of use and/or before being used again, or if visibly soiled or damp/wet.
- Disposable faces masks should be changed daily or when visibly soiled, damp, or damaged.
- An additional mask should be kept in students' backpacks.
- Per order of the CDC, passengers and drivers must wear masks on school buses.

1.4 Maintain Physical Distance and Cohorting:

Physical distancing recommendations must not prevent a school from offering full-day, full-time, in-person learning to all students and staff for the 2021-2022 school year.

- When possible, 3 feet of distance between students in the classroom setting and outside of classrooms in hallways and auditoriums, will be maintained while offering full-time, in-person learning to all students.
- Structural interventions within classrooms to aid with social distancing, including plexiglass sneeze guards on desks, will be used.
- The CDC recommends a distance of 6 feet between students and teachers/staff and between teachers/staff who are not fully vaccinated.



- Students in early childhood will nap head-to-toe and will not wear masks during naptime.

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- Physical distancing will be maintained during indoor activities when increased exhalation occurs. Students will remain in cohorts to the extent possible.
- Nonessential meetings and entrance into the school will be avoided until further notice.
- Outdoor classes are permitted when seasonally appropriate.
- Stagger bathroom times as per schedule (3 students at a time).
- Outdoor recess will be held, weather permitting, in designated areas by cohorts/grade level. Cones will be used to create boundaries between groups. The use of playground equipment will be staggered.
- Physical Education will take place outdoors, weather permitting. Students will follow physical distance guidelines when in the Gym.
- Until further notice, there will be no visitors allowed in the school building. Parents/guardians may request virtual or telephone conferences with teachers. A drop off box outside of the Ryders Lane school entrance will be placed for mail or packages. Please ring the bell at the main entrance (Ryders Lane) to inform Mrs. Tkacenko that items were left in the drop off box.

1.5 Hand Hygiene and Respiratory Etiquette:

Hand hygiene includes handwashing with soap and water for at least 20 seconds or using hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol if safe to do so. Young children will be assisted. Hand sanitizer stations are provided in every room and entrance. Parents/guardians are asked to send in small, individual hand sanitizer for their children to be kept at their desks for personal use. Parents/guardians should also provide personal water bottles for their children daily.

- Students and staff should cover coughs and sneezes with a tissue during those limited instances when the individual may be unmasked. Used tissues should be thrown out and hand hygiene should be performed immediately.
- EPA approved wipes are in every classroom and common area.
- Hand hygiene should take place:
 - ❖ Upon arrival at school;
 - ❖ Before and after meals and snacks;
 - ❖ After going to the bathroom;
 - ❖ Before leaving for the day;
 - ❖ After blowing nose, sneezing, or coughing into tissue; and
 - ❖ When hands are visibly soiled;
 - ❖ Young children will be assisted.

1.6 Meals:

Students are required to bring snacks, lunch, drinks, utensils, and water bottles everyday and will eat in the classroom under supervision. No lunch will be served. Students are not permitted to share food. Disposable food service items will not be provided. No refreshments to share should be sent into school in order to limit the risk of contamination. No food should be delivered. Birthdays may be celebrated with a dress down.

1.7 Transportation:

Masks must be worn by all passengers on buses, regardless of vaccination status per CDC's Federal Order. Schools will follow protocols outlined by the local district providing busing.

CLEANING, DISINFECTION, AND AIRFLOW

2.1 Limit Use of Shared Supplies and Equipment:

- Minimize sharing of high-touch materials.
- Encourage hand hygiene practices between use of shared items.
- Discourage use of shared items that cannot be cleaned or disinfected.

2.2 Cleaning and Disinfection:

St. Bartholomew School will follow standard procedures for routine cleaning and disinfecting with an EPA-registered product for use against SARS-CoV-2. A minimum of at least daily cleaning and disinfecting surfaces and objects that are touched often, such as desks, doorknobs, keyboards, hands-on learning items, faucet handles, and toys will take place. More frequent cleaning of high touch surfaces will be done throughout the day.

- If a person exhibits COVID-19 compatible symptoms or tests positive for COVID-19 within 24 hours of being in the school building, school staff will clean and disinfect the spaces occupied by the person. Once the area has been appropriately disinfected, it can be re-opened for use.
 - ❖ The area used by the person who is sick or positive is not used until after cleaning and disinfecting.
 - ❖ Staff will wait several hours after the person has exited a space before cleaning or disinfecting.
 - ❖ Windows and doors will be open and fans will be used to increase air circulation in the area.
 - ❖ A mask and gloves will be worn while cleaning and disinfecting.

2.3 Improving Airflow:

Improve airflow to the extent possible to increase circulation of outdoor air, increase the delivery of clean air, and dilute potential contaminants.

- Bring in as much outdoor air as possible by opening windows and classroom doors.
- Use child-safe fans and overhead fans.
- Have activities or classes outdoors when circumstances allow.

SCREENING, EXCLUSION, AND RESPONSE TO SYMPTOMATIC STUDENTS AND STAFF

3.1 Parental Screening:

Parents/guardians/caregivers should monitor their children for signs of illness every day. Students who are sick should not attend school. Parents/guardians should monitor symptoms and keep children home while ill.

3.2 Response to symptomatic Students and Staff:

Procedures are in place to identify and respond to a student or staff member who becomes ill with COVID-19 symptoms.

- A designated room will be used to isolate individuals who become ill with COVID-19 symptoms while at school.
- School nurse will use Standard and Transmission-Based Precautions.
- If multiple people are in the Isolation Room, they will be 6 feet apart.
- Follow guidance for cleaning, disinfection, and airflow.

3.3.1 Definition of COVID-19 Compatible Symptoms:

Parents/guardians should not send students to school when sick. A general rule is: "If you feel sick, stay home." NJDOH recommends that students with the following symptoms be promptly isolated from others and excluded from school:

- Fever $\geq 100.3^{\circ}\text{F}$ or vomiting;
- At least 2 of the following symptoms: chills, rigors, myalgia (muscle aches), headache, sore throat, nausea, diarrhea, fatigue, congestion, or runny nose; OR
- At least one of the following symptoms: cough, shortness of breath, difficulty breathing, new olfactory disorder, or new taste disorder.
- For students with chronic illness, only new symptoms or symptoms worse than baseline should be used to fulfill symptom-based exclusion criteria.

3.3.2 When Illness Occurs in the School Setting:

Children and staff with COVID-19 symptoms will be separated away from others until they can be sent home. Students who are sick will be provided with a new mask unless there is a contraindication to doing so. If a mask is not tolerated, other staff should be masked and follow maximum physical distancing guidelines (at least 6 feet away).

- Ask ill student (or parent/guardian) and staff whether they have had potential exposure to COVID-19 in the past 14 days meeting the definition of a close contact.
- Individuals should be sent home and referred to a healthcare provider. Persons with COVID-19 compatible symptoms should undergo COVID-19 testing.
 - ❖ If community transmission is low, ill individuals without potential exposure to COVID-19 should follow the NJDOH School Exclusion List to determine when they may return to school. No public health notification is needed unless there is an unusual increase in number of persons who are ill (over normal levels), which might indicate an outbreak.
 - ❖ If ill students have potential COVID-19 exposure or if community transmission is moderate or high, they should continue to be excluded according to the COVID-19 Exclusion Criteria.
- Nurse will notify the Local Health Department when students or staff:
 - ❖ Are ill and have potential COVID-19 exposure;
 - ❖ When they see an increase in the number of persons with COVID-19 compatible symptoms.
 - ❖ Nurse will provide the Local Health Department with contact information for the ill persons; date the ill person developed symptoms, tested positive for COVID-19 (if known), and was in the building; types of interactions (close contacts, length of contact) the person may have had with other persons in

the building; names, addresses, and telephone numbers for ill person's close contacts in the school; vaccination status (if known); any other information to assist with the determination of next steps.

- ❖ Regardless of vaccination status, if a student or staff experiences COVID-compatible symptoms, they should isolate themselves from others, be clinically evaluated for COVID-19, and tested for SARS-CoV-2.

3.3.3 Exclusion:

COVID-19 Exclusion Criteria for Persons Who Have COVID-19 Compatible Symptoms or Who Test Positive for COVID-19:

- Ill individuals with COVID-19 compatible symptoms who have not been tested or individuals who tested positive for COVID-19 should stay home until at least 10 days have passed since symptom onset and at least 24 hours have passed after resolution of fever without fever reducing medications and improvement of symptoms.
- Persons who test positive for COVID-19 but who are asymptomatic should stay home 10 days from the positive test result.
- An alternate diagnosis (including a positive strep test or influenza swab) without a negative COVID-19 test is not acceptable for individuals who meet COVID-19 exclusion criteria to return to school earlier than the timeframes above.

Exception: During periods of low community transmission, ill individuals excluded for COVID-19 compatible symptoms who are not tested and do not have known COVID-19 exposure may follow NJDOH School Exclusion List to determine when they may return to school.

The COVID-19 Exclusion Table described in NJDOH guidance for Local Health Departments can be used to determine the need for and duration of school exclusion based on the level of COVID-19 community transmission in the region.

COVID-19 Exclusion Criteria for Close Contacts:

CDC released guidance with options to shorten the quarantine time period following exposure to a confirmed positive case. While CDC and NJDOH continue to endorse 14 days as the preferred quarantine period, it is recognized that excluded individuals who are close contacts of staff or students who tested positive for COVID-19 may be considered for a reduced exclusion period based on community transmission levels as follows:

High (orange) exposed close contacts should be excluded from school for 14 days.

Moderate or Low (yellow or green) exposed close contacts should be excluded from school for 10 days (or 7 days with a negative test result collected at 5-7 days).

Exposed close contacts who are fully vaccinated and have no COVID-like symptoms:

- Do not need to quarantine, be excluded from school, or be tested following an exposure to someone with suspected or confirmed COVID-19.
- Should still monitor for symptoms of COVID-19 for 14 days following an exposure.

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- If they experience symptoms, they should isolate themselves from others, be clinically evaluated for COVID-19, including SARS-CoV-2 testing and inform their healthcare provider of their vaccination status.
- Those who recently had COVID-19 may also be exempt from quarantine.

Contact Tracing:

Contact tracing is a strategy used to determine the source of an infection and how it is spreading. Finding people who are close contacts of a person who has tested positive for COVID-19 can help prevent further spread of the virus.

Per the CDC, close contact is defined as being within 6 feet of someone with suspected or known COVID-19 for 15 or more minutes during a 24-hour period. In certain situations, it may be difficult to determine whether individuals have met this criterion and an entire cohort, classroom, or other group may need to be considered exposed. These situations should occur rarely.

In the K-12 indoor classroom setting, the close contact definition excludes students who were within 3 to 6 feet of an infected student (laboratory confirmed or clinically compatible illness) where both the infected student and exposed student correctly and consistently wore well-fitting masks the entire time. This exception does not apply to adults in the classroom setting.

The school staff should identify school-based close contacts of positive COVID-19 cases in the school.

- School will assist in identifying the close contacts within the school and communicate this information to the Local Health Department.
- With guidance from the Local Health Department, the school will notify parents/guardians and staff of the close contact exposure and exclusion requirements while maintaining confidentiality.
- The Local Health Department tracing team will notify and interview the close contacts identified by the school and reinforce the exclusion requirements.

School Entrances and Exits:

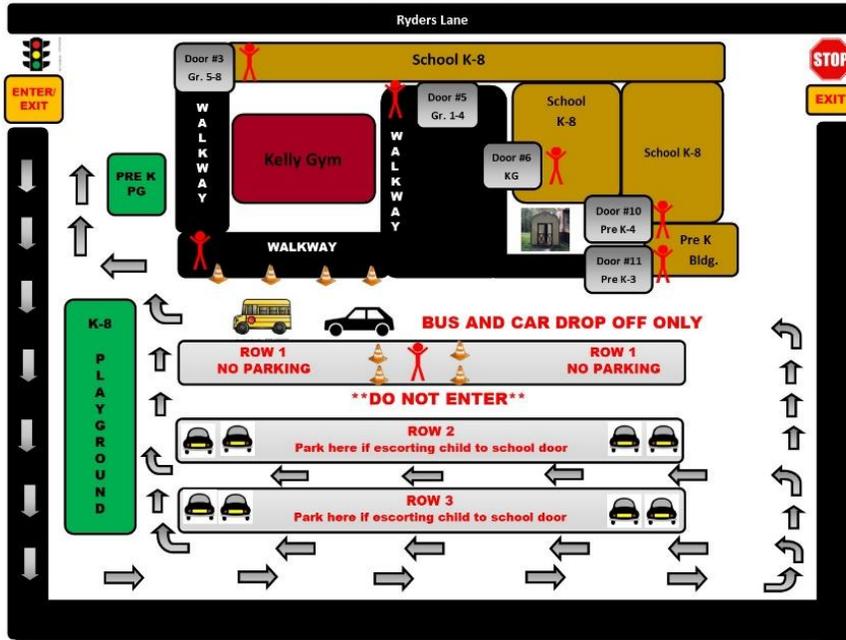
Minimize interaction of students between drop-off and entrance to school facilities. The locations of arrival and drop-off areas by grade level have been put in place to limit contact between students and to avoid direct contact with parents/guardians as much as possible.

- Upon arrival at St. Bartholomew School, students and employees will receive a temperature check via touchless thermometer and will be visually screened for symptoms of COVID-19.
- Students in Grades K-8 who arrive at 6:45 am for Before Care will enter through door #6 after being screened and hand sanitized.
- Separate entrances and exits to school facilities where possible have been established. Pre-K 3 will enter through door #11, Pre-K 4 will enter through door #10. Kindergarten will enter through door #6. Grades 1-4 will enter through door #5 at the end of the path between the Gym and the main building. Grades 5-8 will enter through door #3 by the path near the Pre-K playground. No one other than students and staff is permitted to enter the school building at this time. Students will enter and exit through their designated doors. For dismissal, students in K-8 will be dismissed by grade level to ASC, then to buses, and then to designated areas in the parking lot. One adult should meet his/her child at the designated line and

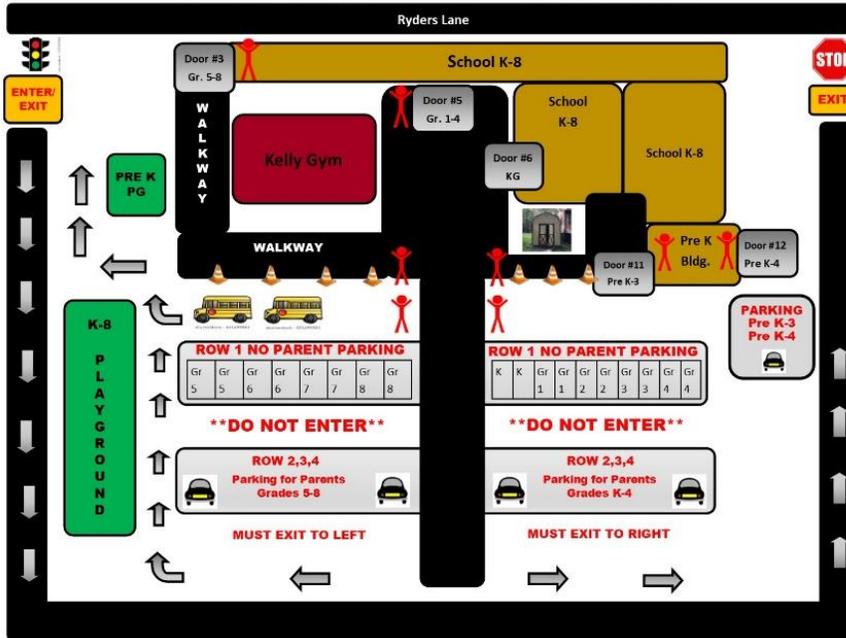
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return to the car. Students in grades K-4 will be dismissed first and students in Grades 5-8 will follow. Pre-K 3 will be dismissed through door #11 and Pre-K 4 will be dismissed through door #12. Do not exit the parking lot until all students are picked up or in a safe place. Please follow directives in the diagram. No one is permitted to park in the first row at any time. Speed limit in the parking lot is 5 mph.

MORNING DROP OFF



Dismissal Pick Up (Park on side of youngest child)



CATHOLIC IDENTITY

Catholic schools have a two-fold charge: to provide an education that is academically excellent and one that is deeply rooted in Catholic identity. Catholic values will be infused intentionally across all grade levels and all subject matter. Participation in liturgy and prayer will continue. Service-learning opportunities will remain a priority. At this time, students in Grades 1-8 will attend Mass bi-weekly and be provided with special Prayer Services. This is subject to change.

SOCIAL EMOTIONAL LEARNING

The guidance counselor has created a cohesive program to address social emotional learning in order to continue to foster a positive learning environment during the pandemic. The guidance counselor will continue to offer individual counseling.

REMOTE LEARNING/180 DAY REQUIREMENT

If confronted with the incidence of COVID-19 positive cases amongst staff and/or students and we are required to exclude a student, group of students or class(es), while the school remains open for in-person instruction, we may offer virtual or remote instructions to those students. *We will not be offering optional remote instruction this school year.*

Temporary remote learning will not be available for any reason other than close contact or a positive COVID-19 test. Students who are out sick with COVID-19 symptoms but do not yet have test results will not have access to live remote learning. Temporary live remote learning will also not be available for students who are home sick for non-COVID reasons, for students who travel, or for any other reason.

EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES/BEFORE AND AFTERCARE PROGRAMS

- Band, Chorus, and Drama are allowed provided protocols are followed.
- Other extracurricular activities are suspended at this time. When they resume, we will adhere to all applicable social distancing requirements and hygiene protocol during any extracurricular activities.

The Pastor and Principal are the final recourse and reserve the right to amend this plan. Parents/guardians will be given prompt notification.