



August 23, 2021

Dear Immaculata Family,

In early August of last year, I wrote to our families to share a 23 page document outlining the reopening of our school. Like the rest of the country, our facility closed in March of 2020 and operated under a very restrictive environment through the summer of 2020. Yet, we knew how important it was to get our students and community back together in our school and so at the end of last summer, *The Immaculata COVID-19 Response Plan* was shared with nervous energy and anticipation for the school year ahead. We reopened our school in the fall of 2020 and we remain so proud of that fact! We couldn't have done it without the support of our students, parents and especially teachers. We ended the 2020-2021 Academic Year strong and although different, we felt it was a great year.

However, we know that the pandemic has caused much heartache as well. We have missed major events, sports seasons, performances... some of us even lost loved ones. As a Catholic community, we have the added benefit to know that our struggles may be offered up and so we ask Mary, Immaculate, to bring peace to those members of our community that may be struggling.

As we look into the start of the new academic year, we are still met with challenges related to the COVID-19 Pandemic. However, I think it is important to realize that we are in a much better place this summer. I am confident that the 2021-2022 school year will be much more "normal."

The NJ Department of Health and NJ Department of Education released health and safety guidance for the 2021-2022. This document is titled, *The Road Forward* and the following Immaculata HS document seeks to address our response to these guidelines. *The Road Forward* document is just guidelines and are not considered mandates. It can be found in its entirety here:

https://www.nj.gov/health/cd/documents/topics/NCOV/school_health_and_safety_standards.pdf

However, effective August 9, 2021, Governor Murphy issued a mask mandate for K-12 schools (E.O. 251 <https://nj.gov/infobank/eo/056murphy/pdf/EO-251.pdf>) that does apply to parochial schools including Immaculata High School.

Finally, and most importantly, Immaculata High School's commitment to have a safe and loving educational environment for our students is steadfast. We are determined to make sure our community members stay safe, yet maintain a measured and sensible approach to COVID restrictions. We thank you for your continued support and prayers.

Immaculate Heart of Mary, Pray for Us!

Mr. Webber

COVID RESPONSE PLAN 2021-2022



Disclaimer

The purpose of this plan is to outline current protocols. It serves as a guide and source of information for parents, students, and staff of the school.

Immaculata High School reserves the right to update this plan according to directives of government, medical, and diocesan authorities.

Health and Safety _____

1.1 Vaccination

The Catholic Church has encouraged vaccination of all people when eligible. All students, by age, are now eligible to receive the vaccine for COVID-19. Immaculata certainly encourages this as an important step to assuage the pandemic in our area, not to mention the more immediate logistical benefits of not getting sick and not having to quarantine for close contact. However, it is important to note that there are no changes to the student vaccination schedule at this time. In short, the vaccine is not required, but encouraged.

For more information regarding the COVID-19 Vaccine and the Catholic Church's response, please refer to the following documents:

Nov. 2020 USCCB Memo to Bishops re: COVID Vaccine Clarification:

<https://www.usccb.org/resources/memo-to-bishops-on-vaccines-for-covid-19.pdf>

Jan. 2021 'Answers to Key Ethical Questions About COVID-19 Vaccines:

<https://www.usccb.org/resources/Answers%20to%20Key%20Ethical%20Questions%20About%20COVID-19%20Vaccines.pdf>

Mar. 2021 Press Release re: Pro-Life issues concerning COVID-19 Vaccine:

<https://www.usccb.org/news/2021/us-bishop-chairmen-doctrine-and-pro-life-address-use-johnson-johnson-covid-19-vaccine>

1.2 Communication

The NJ DOH provides information in COVID-19 Transmission rates at the regional level. This website: <https://www.nj.gov/health/cd/topics/ncov.shtml> will be the preeminent source of information used by Immaculata High School.

1.3 Masks

Governor Murphy's executive order (E.O. 251 <https://nj.gov/infobank/eo/056murphy/pdf/EO-251.pdf>) requires that masks be worn by all in PreK-12 schools, including parochial schools, regardless of vaccination status. This means that masks will be required by all Immaculata HS community members for the start of the 2021-2022 academic year. Some exceptions apply where the mask may be removed indoors as enumerated in the executive order. Please note, documentation will be required for some exceptions as outlined in the executive order.

Masks will not need to be worn outside.

Masks must be solid in color and not have any writing. Masks may not display political messaging of any kind. Disposable surgical masks or N95 respirator masks are preferred, but cloth face coverings are also permissible.

When Executive Order 251 expires, it is the desire of the Immaculata High School administration to have a "Mask Optional" policy whereas community members that feel more comfortable wearing a mask are

certainly permitted, but general COVID risk assessment regarding masking is made by the community members or their parents.

1.4 Physical Distancing and Cohorting

Immaculata High School will encourage strategies that maximize opportunities to increase the distance between students. For the time being, teachers are asked to keep the student desks in rows and spread out.

1.5 Hand Hygiene and Respiratory Etiquette

Immaculata High School will continue to supply soap in all of the restrooms and hand sanitizer stations throughout the school. Community members will be encouraged to hand sanitize often and wash their hands when possible. Employees are required to wash their hands when using the restroom.

Hand hygiene will be encouraged through signage and verbal announcements. Masking will be requested upon entering the building through signage and community announcements.

Community members are encouraged to bring their own hand sanitizer and keep it on their person.

Community members are required to provide their own mask. Immaculata High School will have extra disposable face masks available for those that forget, have to change a soiled mask or it breaks in some way.

1.6 Meals

The Immaculata HS Cafeteria is open for business as usual. Breakfast and lunch will be offered daily in the servery with some adjustments to reduce self serve items.

The Media Center will continue to allow eating to help reduce the occupancy load of the cafeteria. Some students will also be able to eat outside when weather permits. Students will be encouraged to spread out and not overload tables. Students will be encouraged to not share food items or drinks.

Students will be able to choose their tables and sit with their friends, but Immaculata will maintain a seating chart to address contact tracing if necessary.

1.7 Transportation

Any time students are riding the bus, masks must be worn. This includes to and from school, athletics, music, campus ministry and class trips. This is based on the CDC's federal order which can be found here: https://www.cdc.gov/quarantine/pdf/Mask-Order-CDC_GMTF_01-29-21-p.pdf

Cleaning, Disinfection, and Airflow

2.1 Limit use of Shared Supplies and Equipment

When possible, Immaculata HS will provide students with materials that avoid the need to share. This, however, may not impede the forward progress of instruction. Therefore, if items need to be shared by students, efforts will be made to disinfect equipment routinely. All equipment will be disinfected between use.

Hand hygiene practices will be encouraged, and reminded of during times when school equipment is shared.

2.2 Cleaning and Disinfection

Immaculata High School maintains a regular cleaning and sanitizing schedule. The entire building is cleaned nightly. The restrooms, cafeteria, and other high touch areas are cleaned throughout the day as well.

If a community member exhibits COVID-19 symptoms or tests positive for COVID-19 within 24 hours of being in the building, our school maintenance department will close those areas used by the community member and disinfect the areas involved. Before reopening, and after cleaning, the affected areas will be closed for several hours.

The CDC no longer recommends fogging, fumigation, electrostatic spraying, sanitizing tunnels, high intensity UV radiation and similar methods for disinfection in school settings. Therefore, Immaculata High School will not employ those methods of disinfection.

2.3 Improving Airflow

Immaculata High School will engage in efforts to increase circulation of outdoor air. Filters in HVAC units have been upgraded and will be changed often on schedule as recommended by the manufacturer.

Univents in the main building should be left 'On' as they pull in air from the outside, even when it is not the heating season.

Windows may be open to increase airflow, as long as it doesn't negatively affect classroom temperature and impede on educational operations.

Teachers may use outdoor spaces (at which time masks may be removed) as long as it doesn't negatively affect or impede on educational operations.

Building exhaust fans will remain functional during school hours.

Screening, Exclusion, and Response to Symptomatic Students and Staff _ _ _

3.1 Parental Screening

Parents and Community Members are encouraged to monitor their health for signs of illness every day as they are the front line for assessing illness. Students who are sick should not report to school. Immaculata High School will maintain the 'exclusion criteria' for all community members (section 3.3 Exclusion).

Community members that are **awaiting COVID-19 results (regardless of the reason for having taken the test) may not report to school until the results are in and negative for COVID-19.**

If a community member is experiencing symptoms, they are to stay home and notify the school via email at eschneider@immaculatahighschool.org or call (908) 722-0200 ext 1150. At that point, our school nurse or someone from the school's administration will contact the family to conduct contact tracing and explain next steps.

3.2 Response to Symptomatic Students and Staff

Community members that become ill while in school will report to the Health Office. The Health Office has a COVID-19 Isolation Room that will be used for symptomatic community members.

Students' parents will be contacted at that time. Students will be sent home with a 'Student Health Referral' that will need to be completed before returning to school. Students that are **awaiting COVID-19 results may not report to school until the results are in and negative for COVID-19.**

The Health Office and/or Isolation Room may close to follow the guidance of 2.2.

3.3 Exclusion

3.3.1 Definition of COVID-19 Compatible Symptoms:

- Two of the following symptoms: Fever, Chills, Rigors (Shivers), Myalgia (Muscle Aches), Headache, Sore Throat, Nausea or Vomiting, Diarrhea, Fatigue, Congestion, or Runny Nose **OR**
- One of the following symptoms: Cough, Shortness of Breath, Difficulty Breathing, New Olfactory Disorder, or New Taste Disorder

3.3.2 When Illness Occurs in the School Setting:

- Community members with COVID-19 Symptoms will report to the Health Office Isolation Room (See 3.2)
- Student's parents will be notified and the student will be sent home with a 'Student Health Referral' for COVID-19 testing.
- Ill community members will follow the "NJDOH School Exclusion List."
- Immaculata High School will notify community members that are considered to have been in 'Close Contact' >6ft for <15 min

Regardless of Vaccination status, community members experiencing symptoms of COVID-19 should be isolated from others and be clinically evaluated for COVID-19 and tested.

3.3.3 Exclusion

Symptomatic and COVID Positive Community Members:

- Symptomatic individuals who have not been tested or have tested POSITIVE must stay home for 10 calendar days after symptom onset and at least 24 hours have passed after resolution of fever without fever reducing medications and improvement in symptoms.
- Asymptomatic individuals who have tested POSITIVE must stay home for 10 calendar days from the date of the positive test.
- Individuals with an alternate diagnosis (including Strep and Flu), but do not have a negative COVID test, must stay home for 10 calendar days.

COVID-19 Close Contact Exclusion Criteria:

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.

The CDC and NJ DOH continue to endorse the 14 calendar day exclusion as the preferred quarantine period- and thus preferred school exclusion period- regardless of community transmission level. However, due to the burden this causes weighed against the small possibility of spreading the virus, we are permitted to use the following procedure for close contact individuals:

High (Orange) = 14 Calendar Days

Moderate or Low (Yellow or Green) = 10 Calendar Days OR 7 Calendar Days with a negative COVID test on day 5-7

Date of exposure is considered Day '0'

Exposed Close Contacts who are fully vaccinated and have no COVID-like symptoms Do NOT need to quarantine or be excluded from school. However, they should continue to monitor their health. Immaculata High School will ask for proof of vaccination at which time a community member is considered to have been in 'close contact.'

Attendance/Remote Instruction

Immaculata High School will not be offering an optional virtual only attendance allowance in place of in-person instruction. All students are required to be in school on all school days according to the Immaculata High School attendance policy as enumerated in the Parent/Student Handbook.

If we are confronted with a positive incidence of COVID-19 in our school community that requires a student(s) to stay home, this decision will be made by the school administration and appropriate attendance considerations will be made at that time. Most likely this will be in the form of asynchronous instruction the day(s) that will count as in person days while the school facility is open and operating normally. If larger groups of students, groups or classes meet the exclusion criteria, the Immaculata administration may decide to have synchronous instruction and we will follow the "Virtual Learning Plan" found in Appendix F of the Parent/Student Handbook.

*Contact Tracing*_____

Immaculata High School will cooperate with the Somerset County Department of Health and their contact tracing efforts to the extent possible.

Immaculata High School will define 'Close Contact' per the CDC definition. For close contact individuals, Immaculata High School will do the following:

- Immaculata will identify community members who are considered to have been in 'Close Contact.' Our primary mode for this will be student rosters, teacher seating charts and groups/teams membership.
- Immaculata will notify community members and/or parents of potential close contact exposure using our 'School Messenger' system.
- Immaculata's Health Office and Attendance office will reinforce exclusion requirements.
- Immaculata Academic Office will address any academic notification and ensure academic progress is maintained by students while on exclusion criteria.

*Testing*_____

Immaculata High School encourages unvaccinated community members to test often for COVID-19.

Immaculata High School will require testing from unvaccinated community members considered to have been in 'Close Contact' and wishing to return from the exclusion criteria on the reduced quarantine protocols.

Immaculata High School will not engage in screening testing, temperature checks or other COVID-19 screening attestation forms.