



# **RETURN-TO-SCHOOL PLAN**

*IN RESPONSE TO COVID-19*

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**Prepared: July 30, 2020**  
**Revised: August 23, 2021**

**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. The guidelines referenced in this plan are based on guidance from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), World Health Organization (WHO), and the State of New Jersey Department of Education (NJDOE) *The Road Forward*. Regular updates will be made to this plan based on information provided by the CDC, WHO, and applicable federal, state and local agencies.

SOURCES:

CDC - [https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/schools-childcare/schools.html#anchor\\_1589931942037](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/schools-childcare/schools.html#anchor_1589931942037)

NJDOE - <https://www.nj.gov/education/reopening/NJDOETheRoadBack.pdf>

PRINCIPAL PRINCIPLES, LLC, STEPHANIE MCCONNELL, - <http://www.principalprinciples.net>

**GUIDING PRINCIPLES**

In order to ensure the continued well-being of our employees the following guiding principles have been put in place:

1. EMPLOYEE AND STUDENT SAFETY MEASURES
2. HEALTH GUIDELINES
3. SUPPORT FOR FAMILIES

**PHASES AND TIMELINES**

Information and direction about the phases and timeline will be sent to all employees and parents before implementation. Please see below for a summary of the phases and timelines.

Phase	Timing	Items
Planning	July	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Supplies, equipment</li> <li>• Prepare detailed work schedule for phases</li> <li>• Prepare building and transportation for reopen with thorough cleaning</li> </ul>
Phase 1	August	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Implement social distancing protocol and open facilities with limited access/use</li> </ul>
Phase 2	August	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Expand use of school based on recommendations and data from CDC, NJDOH, New Jersey Governor, and applicable state and local agencies</li> </ul>

Phase 3	September	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Open school</li><li>• Expand full operation based on recommendations and data from CDC, NJDOH, New Jersey Governor, and applicable local and state agencies</li><li>• Determine what restrictions/guidelines stay in place</li></ul>
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**VISITOR RESTRICTIONS**

St. Therese School will not allow normal visitation to our campuses until reopen date. Only St. Therese School staff are allowed on campus during preparation for reopen.

Once school begins in September, visitors and volunteers will not be permitted to enter the school building until further notice and guidance from CDC or state government. Fewer people entering the school building allows for greater implementation of safety measures.

**Employees:**

School staff are required to wear face coverings unless doing so would inhibit the individual’s health.

- If an employee becomes ill at work or if another person is exhibiting symptoms of COVID19 at work, they will be asked to leave work and go home or to the nearest health center.
- Employees returning to work from an approved medical leave should contact HR. You will be asked to submit a healthcare provider’s note before returning to work.
- If an employee has been diagnosed with COVID19, the school, Catholic Schools Office, and local health department must be contacted. The health department will determine the next steps.

**Students:**

- Parents are encouraged to be on the alert for signs of illness in their children and to keep them home when they are sick.
- Students are required wear face coverings, unless doing so would inhibit the student’s health. It is also necessary to acknowledge that enforcing the use of face coverings may be impractical for young children or individuals with disabilities.
- Student health checks must be conducted safely and respectfully, and in accordance with any applicable privacy laws and regulations.
- Results must be documented when signs/symptoms of COVID-19 are observed.
- All screenings must take into account students with disabilities and accommodations that may be needed in the screening process for those students.

### Protocol for Symptomatic Staff and Students

St. Therese School procedures for symptomatic staff and students:

- Students and staff with symptoms related to COVID-19 must be safely and respectfully isolated from others.
- Students should remain in isolation with continued supervision and care until picked up by an authorized adult.
- Continuous monitoring of symptoms
- Follow current State of New Jersey Communicable Disease Service guidance for illness reporting - <https://www.nj.gov/health/>
- If the St. Therese School becomes aware that an individual who has spent time in the school tests positive for COVID-19, school officials must immediately notify local health officials, staff, and families of a confirmed case while maintaining confidentiality.
- Adequate amount of personal protective equipment (PPE) will be available, accessible, and provided for use.

If an employee or student becomes ill on campus, he/she will immediately report to the **nurse's isolation room** and the case form will be completed.

Once the employee or student arrives at the isolation room, immediately provide them with a mask and gloves. Explain that this is to help protect other employees and students and prevent the spread of the potential virus.

- The nurse must call the local health authority and seek advice regarding transportation and location.
- The nurse and others attending the suspected infected person, should also wear a protective mask and gloves while working with the suspected infected person. If a mask is not tolerated by the child, staff should use a face covering and follow social distancing guidelines (6 ft. away).
- The nurse will direct the ill employee to leave work or call the parent of the student to be picked up and go home.
- The nurse and principal must identify persons who may have come in contact with the suspected infected person. ***Unless required by the local health authority, the name of the employee should not be provided.***
- Advise employees that they may have been in contact with a suspected employee and to carry out self-screening every morning, and based on the results, contact the HR department.
- The isolation area and suspected employee's or student's work area/classroom must be thoroughly cleaned and disinfected, in addition to all other common surfaces recently touched by the employee or student.

When an individual tests positive for COVID-19, St. Therese School will immediately notify local health officials, staff and families of a possible or confirmed case while maintaining confidentiality.

St. Therese School will be prepared to provide the following information when consulting public health:

- The identity of the person with COVID-19 or probable COVID-19 (i.e. staff, child in care, household contact).
- The date the person with COVID-19 or probable COVID-19 was last in the building
- The date the person developed symptoms.
- Types of interactions the person may have had with other persons in the building or in other locations.
- How long their interactions were with other persons in the building.
- If other persons in the childcare program have developed any symptoms; and
- Any other information to assist with the determination of next steps.

### **Readmittance Procedures After Recovery From COVID:**

Readmittance procedures for students and employees to school after recovering from COVID 19 have been established in conjunction with the school nurse under the guidance from the CDC, State of New Jersey, the New Jersey Department of Health and its local agencies. Those diagnosed with COVID 19 will remain home for 14 days after the diagnosis and have clearance and documentation from their medical doctor before returning.

## **SOCIAL DISTANCING**

Social distancing is an effective way to prevent potential infection. St. Therese School employees, students, parents, and visitors will practice staying approximately 3 feet away from others and eliminating contact with others.

- Schools must allow for social distancing within the classroom to the maximum extent practicable. This can be achieved by ensuring students are seated at least 3 feet apart and considering the flow of student traffic around the room. Social distancing guidance will support a 3-foot radius around each student desk (from the center), resulting in a 3 foot total distance between any two students.
- If schools are not able to maintain this physical distance, additional modifications should be in place. These include using physical barriers between desks and turning desks to face the same direction (rather than facing each other) or having students sit on only one side of the table, spaced apart.
- When weather allows, windows should be opened to allow for greater air circulation. Indoor environments with recirculated air are the riskiest of environments for COVID-19 spread.
- Ad-hoc Interactions/Gatherings – Non-essential/informal meetings and visiting should be avoided.

## **PERSONAL PROTECTIVE EQUIPMENT (PPE)**

In order to minimize exposure to COVID-19, PPE may be needed to prevent certain exposures. PPE can include:

**Masks:** Face masks are an important part of employee protection, as well as personal hygiene, social distancing, and frequent cleaning efforts.

St. Therese School staff are required to wear face coverings unless doing so would inhibit the individual's health. Students are required to wear face coverings, unless doing so would inhibit the student's health. It is necessary to acknowledge that enforcing the use of face coverings may be impractical for young children or individuals with disabilities.

**Gloves:** Touching your face with contaminated hands, whether gloved or not, poses a significant risk of infection. Wearing gloves does not diminish the need to wash your hands. Please remember to wash your hands properly as it is the number-one defense against any virus. Additionally, the proper removal of gloves reduces the risk of being exposed to contamination.

*Please note that social distancing should still be practiced even with the use of gloves and masks.*

In addition to using PPE, please remember to:

- Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. Use hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol if soap and water are not available
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth
- Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when you cough or sneeze or use the inside of your elbow

## **CLASSROOM AND COMMON SPACES**

St. Therese School staff will use the signage provided to indicate the room for sanitizing and disinfecting. All teachers and students are asked not to visit another classroom outside of their team or grade level. Employees are encouraged to disinfect their own personal workspace (teacher desk, phone, etc) throughout the day, giving special attention to commonly touched surfaces.

### **Classrooms:**

- There should be a 3 foot separation of desks and children. Turn desks to face in the same direction (rather than facing each other) or have students sit on only one side of tables, spaced apart. For furniture that is intended to accommodate more than one student the school should explore bringing in furniture to replace the multi-student furniture or consider some type of partitioning system.

- **It is highly recommended that students do not change classes or leave their rooms.** Consider keeping classes together to include the same group of children each day (cohorts). **Where applicable, teachers will change classrooms, with students staying in the same classroom.** For all grade levels: Students will be directed under the supervision of the teacher to clean their personal space (including desks, cubby and/or lockers). This includes students using approved cleaning products to wipe down desks when leaving the classroom and arriving in the classroom.
- Larger rooms (i.e. auditorium, cafeteria, gym) can be used as classrooms to allow for social distancing.
- Allow minimal mixing between groups/cohorts.
- Allow outdoor classrooms where possible and when seasonally appropriate.
- Provide hand sanitizer in every classroom, in accordance with CDC guidelines.

**School Entrances, hallways, and common spaces:**

- If physical distancing (three feet) cannot be maintained for individuals in line waiting to enter or exit a building, require utilization of face coverings. Provide physical guides, such as tape on floors or sidewalks and signs on walls, to help ensure that staff and students remain at least 3 feet apart in lines and at other times (e.g. guides for creating “one-way routes” in hallways).
- Minimize interaction of students between drop-off and entrance to school facilities.
- Establish separate entrances and exits to school facilities where possible.
- Create “one-way routes” in hallways.
- Maintain social distancing in hallways and common areas.
- Minimize the number of non-essential interactions between students and staff throughout the school day.
- Create student cohorts as an effective strategy to limit exposure and contact.
- Limit co-mingling between classes or other groups of students.
- Minimize large group gatherings.
- Create a system that allows for physical distancing.
- Provide hand sanitizer at school entrances.
- Put signage around school buildings to provide hygiene advice and reminders (CDC offers printable resources and handwashing posters).
- Increase frequency of cleaning all surfaces, including walls (to the appropriate height based on age of students).
- Limit the number of students in the hallway at the same time by staggering release from classrooms.
- If feasible, install physical barriers, such as sneeze guards and partitions, particularly in areas where it is difficult for individuals to remain at least 3 feet apart (e.g., reception desks).
- Consider a schedule that limits access, if at all, to lockers to keep traffic in the hallways within social distancing protocols.
- Most schools have limited entry/exit points for security purposes, but additional entry/exit points may need to be established to ensure a balance of social distancing and security protocols.

**Other Considerations:**

- Limit use of supplies and equipment to one group of children at a time and clean and disinfect between use.
- When possible, ensure adequate supplies to minimize sharing of high touch materials to the extent possible.
- Students will not share electronic devices, toys, books, and other games or learning aids, or thoroughly clean and disinfect between use.
- Keep each child’s belongings separated from others’ and in individually labeled containers, cubbies, or areas.
- Increase circulation of outdoor air as much as possible, for example, by opening windows and doors. Do not open windows and doors if doing so poses a safety or health risk (e.g., risk of falling, triggering asthma symptoms) to children using the facility.
- Add time to lunch and recess periods to ensure students have time to wash their hands.
- Build in the practice of handwashing throughout the day, during transition times.

**FACILITIES CLEANING**

The safety of our employees and students are our first priority. Upon reopening, our school will have been completely cleaned and disinfected, and we will continue to adhere to all necessary safety precautions. In addition to the deep clean of the office and school before employees and students return, the cleaning steps outlined below are to be taken to disinfect workplace surfaces, chairs, tables, etc. to protect employees and reduce the risk of spread of infection. We will require employees to maintain this safety standard by continuously cleaning and disinfecting based on the frequency stated below. Deep cleaning is triggered when an active employee or student is identified as positive for COVID 19 based on testing.

**GENERAL DISINFECTION MEASURES**

<b>Category</b>	<b>Area</b>	<b>Frequency</b>
<b>Workspaces</b>	Classrooms, Offices and Resrooms	At the end of each use/day
<b>Appliances</b>	Refrigerators, Microwaves, Coffee Machines	Daily
<b>Electronic Equipment</b>	Copier machines, Shared computer monitors, TV’s, Telephones, keyboards	At the end of each use/day and/or between use



<b>General Used Objects</b>	Handles, light switches, sinks, restrooms	Several times a day
<b>Buses</b>	Bus seats, handles/railing, belts, window controls	At the end of each use/day
<b>Common Areas</b>	Cafeteria, Library, Conference rooms, Rest rooms, Gyms, Common Areas	At the end of each use/day; between groups

Prepare and maintain hand sanitizing stations with alcohol-based hand sanitizers (at least 60% alcohol):

- In each classroom (for staff and older children who can safely use hand sanitizer).
- At entrances and exits of buildings.
- Near lunchrooms and toilets.
- Children ages 5 and younger should be supervised when using hand sanitizer.
- For classrooms that have existing handwashing stations, prepare stations with soap, water, and alcohol-based hand sanitizers (at least 60% alcohol).
- Students should wash hands for at least 20 seconds at regular intervals, including before eating, after using the bathroom, and after blowing their nose/coughing/sneezing.
- Use alcohol-based hand sanitizer (at least 60% alcohol) if washing with soap and water is not possible.

**For Early Childhood programs, when possible:**

- Keep children six feet apart during nap time (can have cots oriented head to foot), when eating, and doing other activities.
- Avoid close group learning activities like reading circles.
- Designate times on the schedule to take students out of the classroom to wash hands with soap and water, including, at a minimum:
  - at the start of the day when children enter the classroom
  - before snacks and lunch
  - after using the toilet or helping a child use a toilet
  - after sneezing, wiping, and blowing noses
  - after snacks and lunch, particularly if hands are sticky, greasy or soiled
  - when students come in from outdoor play or recess

In limited cases, hand hygiene with an alcohol-based sanitizer or alcohol-based wipes, when there is no visible soiling of hands, are alternatives to hand washing with soap and water by children over 24 months of age, under the supervision of the teacher. The CDC recommends an alcohol-based sanitizer that is at least 60% alcohol and to rub the product over all

surfaces of your hands and fingers until your hands are dry, about 20 seconds, then wash hands with soap and water as soon as possible.

## SIGNAGE

Signage will be placed throughout the offices and school.



## FOOD DELIVERY

Students: Bringing or sharing refreshments during school is prohibited to limit the risk of contamination. Snack items, candy, and drinks will not be provided until further notice (with the exception of lunch). We ask that there be no food delivered and that food be kept at your assigned space. Personal deliveries such as packages should not be delivered to the school.

## BUS DRIVERS/BUS PROTOCOLS

Schools will follow the protocols outlined by the local district providing busing. For schools with their own buses, bus drivers or custodial staff must disinfect the buses at a minimum:

1. Right before starting a route to pick up students
2. Right after the morning and afternoon routes

Bus drivers must not report to work if they suspect they are sick or if they have symptoms such as fever or difficulty breathing, or have been in contact with other people who have any confirmed respiratory illness or disease the last 7 days.

## **RESTROOM USAGE DURING THE SCHOOL DAY**

The school will establish maximum capacity for the facility that allows for social distancing. The school will post the maximum capacity sign on the door. There will be limited shared use of restrooms. Restrooms will be cleaned before, during and after school.

## **RECESS, PHYSICAL EDUCATION, LOCKERS AND LOCKER ROOMS**

- Stagger recess. If two or more groups are participating in recess at the same time, they should have at least 3 feet of open space between them.
- Use cones, flags, tape, or other signs to create boundaries between groups.
- Always wash hands immediately after outdoor playtime.
- The use of playground equipment will be prohibited. Complete an inventory of outdoor spaces (athletic fields, track, green spaces, open space, and local parks) and designate zones, use stations, mark off areas, floor markers, floor tape, poly spots, etc., to ensure separation among students (three feet for social distancing).
- Consider closing locker rooms to mitigate risk and prohibit students and staff from confined spaces with limited ventilation and/or areas with large amounts of high contact surfaces. If not feasible to close, stagger use and clean and disinfect between use.
- Students may be encouraged to wear comfortable clothing and safe footwear to school that allows for safe movement and is appropriate for the weather in order to participate in physical education without the use of a locker room.
- Mitigate risk, limit and/or eliminate direct contact with equipment (lessons with no equipment) and do not allow sharing of equipment. If equipment must be shared, clean and disinfect between each use.
- Designate specific areas for each class during recess to avoid cohort mixing.

## **VISITORS ON CAMPUS**

Until further notice there will be no visitors allowed in the building unless they are vaccinated. All visitors must wear a mask even if they are vaccinated.

## **CAFETERIA AND MEAL PERIODS**

The first preference is for students to remain in a self-contained classroom. Meals should be brought to the classrooms. If this is not feasible (especially with high school students), students will have to maintain social distancing. The school should consider assigned seats throughout the year. Tables need to be cleaned after each use according to guidelines.

If cafeterias or group dining areas are used in the future:

- Stagger times to allow for social distancing, and clean and disinfect between groups. Discontinue family style, self-service, and buffet.
- Clean and sanitize tables/surfaces between each meal service, pursuant to the protocols outlined here by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA).
- Space students at least six feet apart.
- Individuals must wash their hands after removing their gloves or after directly handling used food service items.
- Serve individually plated meals or meals in pre-packaged boxes or bags.
- Ensure students are not sharing food.
- Use disposable food service items (e.g., utensils, dishes).
- If disposable items are not feasible or desirable, ensure that all non-disposable food service items are handled with gloves and washed with dish soap and hot water or in a dishwasher. Encourage proper hand washing before and after eating meals.

## **COMMUNICATION WITH FAMILIES**

School Specific: To stay updated on the most current information:

1. Teachers, students, and parents need to check their email often.
2. Visit the school website, check Remind, and read Principal's Blog
3. Follow our social media platforms
4. SeeSaw PK-2; Google Classroom Grades 3-12
5. Rediker Student Information System
6. AP Notify Alert System

## **ACADEMICS AND HOME-BASED LEARNING**

There are three considerations (Traditional, Hybrid, and Remote) for returning to school, depending upon state and local health guidelines. Presently, the State of New Jersey is returning to traditional face to face in-class instruction for September 2021. We must be prepared to provide other models of instruction, in case of a Covid 19 outbreak. As of now the governor has stated that there will be no remote or virtual instruction.

St. Therese's goal is to design flexible instructional plans that work best in both traditional face to face and remote environments. The following should be considered:

- Create plans to facilitate meaningful, interdisciplinary units that can be delivered face to face or remotely.
- Ensure all instructional experiences include modeling, guided instruction, collaborative work, and independent work rather than over-reliance on independent work during remote learning. This requires strategic use of synchronous and asynchronous lessons.
- Review and implement best practices in synchronous and asynchronous instruction to meet student needs and engagement.
- Make adjustments to school-based services plans for students with disabilities to account for accommodations and modifications needed in a remote learning environment.
- Ensure meaningful support is provided for English Learners and their families including those teachers, students, and parents are adept at utilizing translation tools.
- Create an "early warning system" to identify and intervene with students who may be exhibiting academic and/or behavioral concerns.
- Develop a plan for benchmark screening and intervention delivery during face-to-face and remote learning.

## **GRADING AND ATTENDANCE POLICY**

To receive credit for the courses for this school year students are expected to complete the assignments. The grading policy is in the school student-parent handbook.

## **REMOTE LEARNING**

In the event that the school has to close and returns to remote learning in 2021-2022, we will follow the guidelines below for receiving and returning student work.

St. Therese School will continue to use Google Classroom for grades 3-12 and SeeSaw for PK-2. Google Classroom and SeeSaw will be another communication method for parents to be able to contact the classroom teachers.

Sending packets home for students is not permitted. The expectation is that all schools will provide daily online virtual instruction for all students.

## **ONLINE INSTRUCTION**

St. Therese School: - Google Meets is our online component to help deliver daily live and instruction from the classroom teacher.

## **EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES/BEFORE AND AFTERCARE**

- Adhere to all applicable social distancing requirements and hygiene protocol during any extracurricular activities.
- Maximize the use of technology and online resources to continue some extra-curricular activities without additional person-to-person contact.
- Restrict use of school facilities to school-sponsored extracurricular activities and groups.
- Cleaning/disinfecting schedule may not allow for in-person gatherings outside school hours.

**St. Therese School: Before and Aftercare programs will continue. Programs must adhere to social distancing and cleaning guidelines. Once the building is vacated no one may return until school reopens the next day.**

## **CATHOLIC IDENTITY**

Catholic schools have a two-fold charge: providing an education that is academically excellent and one that is deeply rooted in Catholic identity. There will be intentional Catholic values infused across all grade levels and all subject matter. Participation in liturgy and prayer will continue to be encouraged for both traditional face to face, and remote settings. Service learning opportunities will remain a priority in our schools.

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