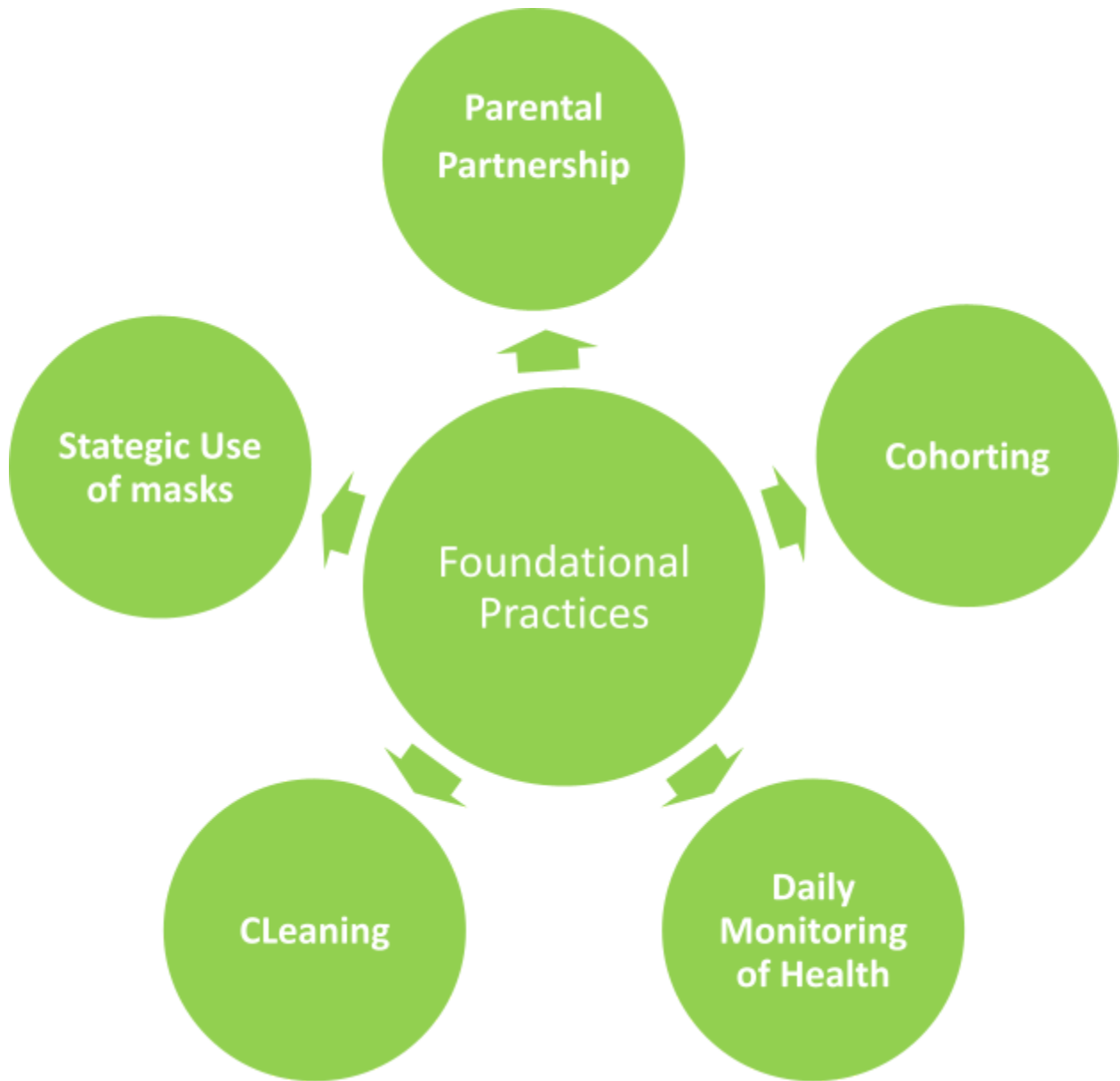


Catholic Schools Onward
*Best Practices and New Opportunities as We Move
Forward*

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 only use virtual learning for those that have been identified with COVID-19 or in situation in which a parent feel working from home is beneficial.

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 suggest 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 – Check with your local school for availability.

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 should wash hands before lunch.
2. The table and desks should be wiped down before and after each meal.
3. Shared meals are discouraged.
4. Students should wash hands after lunch.
5. Students should sit at least three feet apart and in diagonals.
6. During levels of high COVID transmission, it is recommended that students be 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 to insure 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. Schools can mix with other classes 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 if recess is outside.

TRAVELING WITHIN THE BUILDING

Introduction

Movement about the building is essential and cannot be eliminated. Schools need to devise a plan to allow for travel throughout the building while keeping the students and staff safe 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 specifics will differ from school to school, because each school's physical layout is different. As this plan or movement is developed, please keep in mind the strategic use of masks and social distancing.

Whenever possible the use of strategic social distancing is encouraged. Below are some recommendations.

Process

During a High Transmission Level Phase as established by the authorities the below processes may be necessary. Directionality should be established in each school using some of the following principles:

- Each school needs to determine if 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.
- Schools can dedicate a hallway to only travel in one direction if a loop is possible and students can get to point A and back following the loop.
- A schedule should be developed that takes in consideration the movement of classrooms around the building.
- Planned travel, such as to recess, should be planned so several classrooms are not in the hallway simultaneously.
- Keep the door held open during the change of classes to avoid unnecessary touching by students.

ST. RAPHAEL ROOM

Introduction

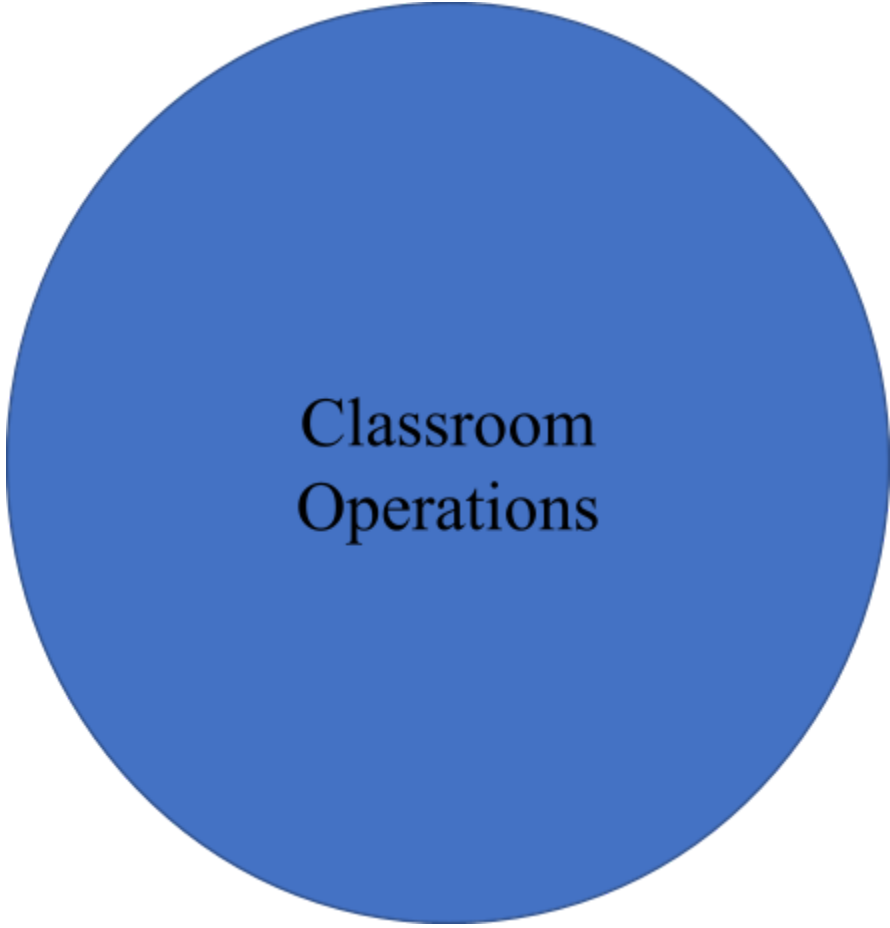
When students are experiencing discomfort or potential symptoms of COVID, they need to be removed to a place where they are isolated from others with enough room that several students could sit in the room and be six feet apart.

Philosophy

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

Process

1. Establish an area that is supervised and can fit multiple students that can be social distanced.
2. Provide masks to all who enter the room.
3. Sanitize objects touched after each use.
4. Provide the room monitor disposable gloves.
5. Keep in the room:
 - a. Disposable paper towels
 - b. Tissues
 - c. Waste container with plastic liner
 - d. Alcohol-based hand sanitizer containing at least 60% alcohol
 - e. Hard-surface disinfectant



Classroom
Operations

CLASSROOM SET-UP

Introduction

The organization of the classroom is important in supporting the academic progress of students. Classroom space should provide 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

1. Schools should move any non-essential furniture, materials or equipment that is not needed and store them in a place outside of the room.
2. Desks should all face in the same direction.
3. Desks should be placed 3 feet from the center of each desk to the center of the next desk or to the greatest extent possible.
4. All throw rugs and roll-up carpets should be removed from room.

MATERIALS WITHIN THE CLASSROOM

Introduction

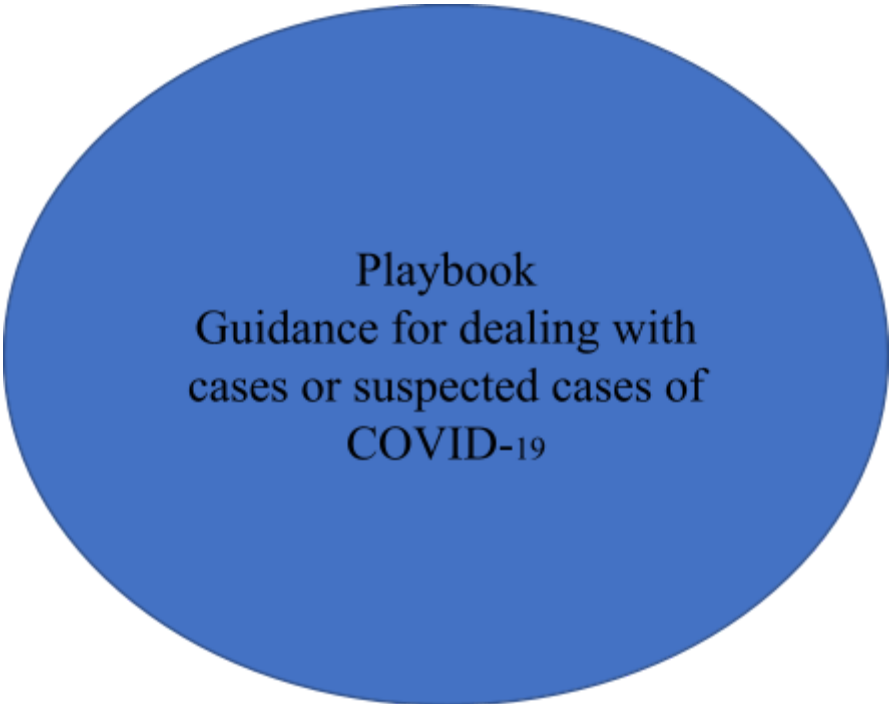
The organization of the classroom is important in supporting the academic progress of students. The use of a variety of materials is essential for learning. This includes, book, writing instruments, and materials for special area subjects.

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 should eliminate, when possible, the use of shared materials.
2. Classrooms should set up areas where students can store personal items that keep them isolated from use by others.
3. When materials must be shared, cleaning in between uses is essential.
 - a. Establish procedures to wipe down before and after every use.
 - b. Remind children to wash their hands after using a shared item.
4. If students travel to a room, an area and place should 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

PLAYBOOK

Schools will make efforts to monitor the health of their students and staff, although it is not required or suggested by the CDC. Specifically, they suggest schools and child care programs are **not expected** to screen children, students, or staff to identify cases of COVID-19. If a community, or specifically 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.
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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.
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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. If the school is equipped and the parents have given permission, administer a COVID test.
3. Provide 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 not wearing a mask	Unvaccinated Student wearing a mask	Vaccinated student
Wearing masks	Required to have a signed waiver	Will need to wear a mask	Mask optional
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
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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

- 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?

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, 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.

- Outdoor classes or sports. Do students have to wear a mask regardless of their vaccination status?

Mask use is strongly recommended *indoors* for all individuals, regardless of their vaccination status in the K-12 setting.

- When a child that is wearing a mask, not vaccinated is in close contact? Do they need to quarantine? I am assuming yes, but not sure.

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, though.

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 has to be a level of intentionality across all grade levels and all subject matter that course content is intentionally Catholic.
2. Schools will need to follow the clergy’s office recommendation regarding school Masses in relation to the appropriate social distancing.

- 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 should be invited to attend.
 - 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. Provide opportunities for daily prayer in a community.
 4. All schools across the diocesan community should include the prayer of Pope Francis on a daily basis.
 5. Support and make modifications to other faith-based activities that are important in the life of the school (i.e., retreats, prayer services).
 6. Increase opportunities for cross-grade faith sharing using virtual means (i.e., prayer buddies meeting virtually).
 7. Begin all lessons with prayer, including soliciting prayer intentions from students.
 8. Support the faith life of faculty and staff through community prayer and scripture study.
 9. Invite parents and families to join in virtual prayer and faith life.
 10. Connect the current events with a Catholic perspective (using the tenets of Catholic Social Teaching, the Virtues, etc.) as a framework to support understanding.
 11. Ensure the presence of the pastor in new school configurations.
 12. Reinforce the role of the principal in the faith life of the school.
 13. Create approaches to minister to families who experience food insecurity, financial issues, and other crises.
 14. Promote service learning experiences in virtual spaces.
 15. 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.) .
 16. Maintain Catholic Identity in the school environment:
 - Make sure that every classroom has a prayer corner, crucifix, statues, bulletin boards reflecting faith values.
 - Laminate the prayer or Pope Francis during the COVID and Prayer of St. Michael and put in a prominent place in the school and classrooms.
 - 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 schools to provide a CARES program especially during the current circumstances. For many 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 should be adhered to during the CARES program. CARES programs are considered by the state to be Child Care programs and should have or be in the process of obtaining 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.

Process

1. Social and safe-distancing practices are to be observed as much as possible. When able, the cohort model should be kept within the CARES program. Students should be kept with the same adult monitor in the program.
2. Outside visitors should not be 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.
3. Students are responsible for providing their own snack and beverage during their time in CARES. There will be no snack sharing.
4. All employees and volunteers (including teens) should follow the same health checklist practices as school employees.
5. All operational guidelines put into place in the school (e.g. movement through the building, recess, etc.) are to be practiced during CARES sessions.
6. Establish a procedure for dismissal at the end of the school day that limits CARES students to vulnerability. (e.g. Call CARES students to the CARES room after all other lines are dismissed.)
7. If the CARES room is a room used during the school day, it must be sanitized prior to student entry for the CARES program.
8. Materials used by CARES students on a regular basis need to be sanitized daily.
9. Monitored hand washing and sanitizing will be done on a regular basis.
10. Follow the Playbook recommendations for any suspected illness.
11. The CARES program will comply with any emergency actions and resulting decisions that occur during the school day.

12. A mobile phone needs to be available to CARES personnel for communications purposes in the event a situation arises during the CARES session.
 13. Communicate exactly what your plan is so that parents know what to expect. Be sure to include in the school handbook the obligation of the parent to take daily health checks.
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Checklist

- Maintain accurate records for CARES students with easy access to the program director. This would include attendance records.
- Establish a schedule and routine limiting the crossover of cohorts during CARES sessions.
- In keeping with Catholic Identity practices, every CARES session should begin 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.
- Insure that students are not sharing materials. (e.g. crayons, pencils, markers).
- Provide opportunities for planned activities for student engagement.
- All employees need to be apprised of:
 1. the Diocesan Standards for CARES and identified in the CARES Handbook.
 2. the Standards put in place by the CSO Task Force.
 3. the Standards for Ministerial Behavior.
 4. Childcare Standards regulated by the Department of Human Services.
- Any person serving as a substitute for a CARES employee needs to be apprised of the standards identified above and agree to adhering to them.
- 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 would be beneficial.
- All CARES programs should have a designated person acting as director, liaison or guide for the program.
- 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

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.
 - Following the recommendations of the local county health department on the wearing of masks is preferred. If mask wearing is recommended, parents who choose not to have their children wear a mask must sign a waiver releasing the school of liability should their child contact COVID.
 - 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. Regular communication 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. Parents should notify the school immediately if their child has been exposed to COVID or is diagnosed with COVID
6. Safe-distancing with young children becomes very difficult; therefore, the students will be kept in cohorts as much as possible.
7. Health checks should be done at home and the staff will follow protocols established at school regarding daily health monitoring.
8. Virtual learning is not recommended at this level. However, if any virtual learning takes place, be sure it is being used consistently throughout the school.
9. Follow the directives established by the CSO task force in all other areas—building management, Catholic Identity, Trauma, CARES, etc.
10. 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 (e.g. Woolite carpet sanitizer kills 99% of germs) During the day, spraying with vinegar will sanitize. Vacuum in the morning.
- Foam 3 x 3 puzzle blocks can also be used and cleaned with a bleach solution.
- Frequently used toys should be cleaned daily. Communicate exactly what your plan is so that parent know what to expect. Be sure to include in school handbook the obligation of the parent to take daily health checks. If the toys were in a child’s mouth, they need to be cleaned after each use.