



## Catholic Schools

# Operating with Trust: A Framework for the 2020/21 School Year

ARCHDIOCESE OF CHICAGO CATHOLIC SCHOOLS  
2020/21 SCHOOL YEAR

**WE ARE  
CALLED...**

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## MESSAGE FROM THE SUPERINTENDENT


Dear Catholic School Leaders, Teachers and Staff,

Now that our schools are open and serving students across the archdiocese in our classrooms, as well as remotely, our focus now turns from reopening to maintaining strong health and safety operations within each of our schools.

Our operating framework builds upon key areas of focus that were compiled with input of several stakeholders including the OCS staff, school principals, teachers, employees, the Archdiocese of Chicago COVID-19 task force, the Illinois State Board of Education and the Illinois Department of Public Health. As has been stated before, the OCS will continue to refine this framework, as necessary, to align with the most current guidance and recommendations from healthcare experts and local departments of public health.

Please know that the OCS and other archdiocesan offices are here to support you throughout the school year. Together, we are doing God's work in educating His children, and I know that God will continue to bless us and our efforts.

Yours in Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jim Rigg". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "J" and "R".

Jim Rigg, Ph.D.  
Superintendent of Catholic Schools  
Archdiocese of Chicago

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Our Operating Framework builds upon the original reopening plan, which was developed by the Office of Catholic Schools in consultation with national education experts, the Chicago Public Schools, and state and local public health officials.

Four guiding principles of our Framework to maintain strong operations of our Catholic schools are:

1. Everything possible should be done to maintain safe, open school buildings and provide a healthy, faith-filled education for our students in a safe and timely manner.
2. The course of the pandemic in Illinois remains fluid. While much has been achieved, there remains the potential that the gains could be lost.
3. We must maintain trust among parents, students and staff that the top priority in any Framework is their safety and well-being.
4. Calling people to exercise faithful citizenship is essential. Each family must take personal responsibility for the common good as well as their own safety. Following the “Five Behaviors” is critical for all within our school communities.

Our Framework directs schools to operate under a Cohort model and provides guidelines around Health and Safety; Academics and Social and Emotional Supports; and Human Resources and Staff Support.

There will be an ongoing review of the Framework and adjustments will be made in accordance with new data and guidelines.

The reopening plan and current operating model were created in consideration of the [Transition Joint Guidance](#) document created by the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) and the Illinois Department of Public Health (IDPH), as well as ongoing, published updates from both agencies. Our Framework is meant to augment the state guidance and clarify how/when this guidance applies to our Catholic schools.

The basics of the Framework are as follows:

1. We will maintain a robust communications effort with families and school staff regarding any updates to our Framework.
2. Each school must strictly follow the **Infection Protocol Guide**, which provides detailed processes and actions for administrators if and when a member of the school community is symptomatic, awaiting a diagnosis, has been in close contact with someone diagnosed with COVID-19 or is confirmed to have contracted COVID-19.
3. The Office of Catholic Schools will conduct ongoing assessments of school operations to ensure that safety protocols are met.
4. Through ongoing discussions with principals, health care professionals, and civil authorities, there will be an ongoing review of the Plan to make adjustments in accord with new data, guidelines, or developments.

Principals should share the appropriate sections of this document with school community stakeholders as appropriate.

## ROLE OF SCHOOL BOARDS

We recommend the principal engage their local school board, when possible and appropriate, on the key provisions of the Framework. The board should be enlisted as advocates within the school community for the successful, ongoing execution of the Framework, as well as adherence to the “Five Behaviors” outside of school. Please see the [Schools page on IZZY](#) for graphics of the “Five Behaviors” that you can use in school communications.

# HEALTH AND SAFETY REQUIREMENTS

This section provides guidelines related to the safety, health and hygiene of students.

**Prior to reopening, principals and members of the Health and Safety Reopening Team should have carefully read pages 30–48 of the ISBE/IDPH's [Transition Joint Guidance](#)** bearing in mind that most are best practices not required for non-public schools. The guidance below is required of all schools and is meant to augment and clarify the [Transition Joint Guidance](#).

## KEY PRINCIPLE – THE COHORT MODEL

All Archdiocese of Chicago schools must operate under a “Cohort” model in which students and staff are grouped by homeroom. These groupings are as static as possible by having the same group of children stay with the same staff (all day for young children and as much as possible for older children).

This strategy maintains a safe environment by eliminating the interaction between cohorts, which allows single classes to be quarantined in the event of infection, rather than closing the entire school building. Homeroom teachers are considered part of the same cohort as their students, but other teachers (including special area teachers) and staff are considered outside the cohort.

Even while utilizing the Cohort model, schools should strive to physically separate students in the same cohort as much as possible. Such separation will help mitigate risk.

## MASKS AND PERSONAL PROTECTIVE EQUIPMENT (PPE)

- All individuals in school buildings must wear masks at all times unless they are younger than two years of age. Individuals who have a specific medical condition may also be exempted from mask requirements, as outlined in the [Transition Joint Guidance](#). Such individuals must be socially distant (at least six feet apart) when not wearing masks.
- Families must provide masks for their child/children.
  - If families are using reusable masks, families should purchase at least two masks, and masks should be washed by parents after every school day.
  - If parents are using disposable masks, masks should be discarded after every school day. Parents should send students with extra disposable masks in case they are damaged during the day.
  - Schools may opt to use transparent masks for select employees, assuming they meet the criteria above.
  - Schools may permit the use of “gaiters” (pull-up face coverings) as an alternative to masks, provided they have three layers of fabric and can remain over the mouth and nose at all times.
  - Valve masks should not be used.
  - Masks should not contain messages or images that would distract from the educational environment of the school.
- Effective early September 2020, each school will receive additional personal protective equipment (PPE) for nurses or school administrators interacting with symptomatic students/personnel and/or staff who clean areas used by symptomatic students/personnel. Per IDPH Guidance, this includes N95 masks, goggles and disposable gowns. Gloves are already on hand at schools.
- Schools should ensure an ongoing supply of masks for all employees (at least two reusable masks or at least eight disposable masks per week per employee).
- Schools should maintain a minimum supply of five masks per student in the event students forget or break their personal mask.
- Schools may opt to purchase face shields for use by select staff members in **very limited situations** (e.g., early education teachers, where facial expressions are important).
  - English Language Learner (ELL) situations where mouth movement must be visible.
  - Speech therapists.
  - Preschool and kindergarten teachers (where facial expressions are important for student development).

- Masks may be removed in special circumstances. These include:
  - When students are eating lunch, breakfast or snacks.
  - When engaged in outside activities or instruction.
  - When removing masks, students and employees **must** remain physically distant by at least six feet.
  - When removed, masks should be stored in an individual paper bag (not plastic or cloth) that is labeled with the individual’s name. Individuals should wash or sanitize hands before putting their masks back on.
- Masks may be moved aside for short sips of water bottles. In such cases, six feet need not be maintained (see section below)
- All students and employees must receive training on proper mask-wearing.
- Schools should maintain a regular supply of gloves for cleaning surfaces and treating students with medical injuries/illnesses.

### **ARRIVAL PROCEDURES – WELLNESS CHECKS**

- Utilize as many exterior entryways as possible and assign classes to enter through only their assigned doorway. This will help limit cross-contamination between cohorts. Avoid congestion of any form around school entrances.
- All students and employees must wear face masks on arrival.
- Schools must perform “Wellness Checks” of **all** students at school entrances as students enter the building. Wellness Checks consist of four individual “checks”:
  - **Temperature Checks:** A temperature check of each student must occur. Any student with a temperature over 100.4 degrees Fahrenheit must be sent home (see Infection Protocol section).
  - **Hand Washing or Sanitizer Check:** Students should either wash hands or receive hand sanitizer (from an adult or a stationary dispenser). Staff should ensure that such hand cleaning occurs.
  - **Mask Check:** A check of each student to ensure that masks are present and properly worn.
  - **Symptom Check:** Students should be asked the following questions every day: “Do you feel sick in any way? Do you have a cough or fever?” Any student who identifies as feeling sick should be sent home.
  - Schools may utilize dependable volunteers to assist with “Wellness Checks.” However, each entrance must contain at least one employee.
- Employees and volunteers are likewise responsible for taking their temperature every day. Any individual with a temperature over 100.4 degrees Fahrenheit must remain home (see Infection Protocol section).
- Parents and guardians should **not** enter the building to escort students to/from classrooms at arrival and dismissal.
- For schools that utilize busing, create distance between children on school buses (e.g., seat children one child per row, skip rows) when possible. Students should wear masks when traveling via bus. No more than 50 individuals should be on a bus at one time.

### **DISMISSAL**

- As with arrival, schools should utilize as many exterior entryways as possible and assign classes to exit through only their assigned doorway.
- Parents should be instructed to remain in vehicles instead of congregating outside school exits. Schools should implement procedures to screen student pickups to ensure ongoing safety.

## **INTERNAL TRAFFIC FLOW**

- Coordinate traffic flow throughout your building, with the intent of keeping cohorts physically apart. Provide physical guides, such as tape on floors or sidewalks and signs on walls, to ensure that staff and children remain at least six feet apart in lines and at other times (e.g., guides for creating “one-way routes” in hallways and stairwells). Depending upon the layout of the school building, consider assigning classes to use specific routes. Carefully think through how students travel through high-traffic areas of the school building, such as the lunchroom, gym and bathrooms.
- Utilize as much of your school building as possible to achieve distancing. Close and (where possible) lock areas of the school building not being used.
- Student lockers should not be shared. If a school has extra lockers, student lockers should be spread out by cohort. Develop a schedule of locker access to mitigate breaking cohorts (e.g., cohorts should be accessing lockers at different times if lockers are located in the same hallway).
- Passing periods should be avoided. As indicated below, students should remain in their homeroom class instead of traveling to other departmentalized classes.

## **GENERAL FACILITY CLEANING, HYGIENE AND SHARED SCHOOL SUPPLIES**

- Schools should follow the building cleaning and disinfection procedures outlined on page 35 of the ISBE/IDPH's [Transition Joint Guidance](#).
- Sharing of school supplies such as pencils, markers and art supplies should be eliminated. All students should maintain their school supplies in individually labeled containers, cubbies, or desks. Shared equipment, such as one-to-one devices, should be used by as few children as possible and must be cleaned and disinfected before use by another child.
- All rooms should have access to either a sink and soap for frequent hand washing or hand sanitizer that contains at least 60 percent alcohol.
- Spray bottles of cleaning disinfectant should be readily available in each classroom and shared space for use throughout the day. Common surfaces in shared spaces (e.g., office, bathrooms, stair handrails, etc.) should be cleaned multiple times per day.
- Install physical barriers, such as sneeze guards and partitions in shared areas where it is difficult for individuals to remain at least six feet apart (e.g., main office desk).
- Food and drink should not be shared (including student snacks, lunches and birthday treats). Food and drink should be covered when not being consumed.
- Drinking fountains should only be used to fill reusable water bottles or to fill disposable cups provided by the school. Signs should be placed on water fountains indicating their sole use for refilling water bottles. If drinking fountains are used, they should be cleaned regularly.
- When practical, increase the 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 of asthma symptoms) to children using the facility.
- When possible, interior doors should be kept open to eliminate the need to use door handles. Be mindful of fire code and student safety when determining whether to keep internal doors open.
- Landline phones should only be used by a single, designated individual.
- For the 2020/21 school year, schools should discontinue the use of perfect attendance awards and assessments based on absenteeism.

## CORE CLASSROOMS – REMAINING WITHIN COHORT

- All students and staff must continue the use of masks within cohorts.
- Students should remain separated by at least three to six feet at all times. Classroom space should be decluttered of non-essential items to maximize floor space.
  - For larger cohorts, consider alternative layouts and/or larger instructional areas so that three to six feet of distancing is possible.
  - If schools are unable to distance students by at least three feet, the principal should contact their Regional Director for further instructions.
- Homeroom teachers are considered part of their class' cohort. As such, they may move throughout the classroom, although they should attempt to maintain distance when possible.
- **Specials teachers are not considered part of any cohort and therefore must maintain a minimum of six feet distance between themselves and students. They should not move throughout the classroom.**
- Eliminate shared spaces, such as reading nooks or instructional breakout tables.
- Arrange desks in rows facing the same direction and provide as much distance between desks as possible. If tables are used instead of desks, attempt to spread out students at tables as much as possible. Consider taping off tables to separate student workspace.
- Frequently clean and disinfect high-touch surfaces daily, including desks and door handles.
- Shared classroom spaces, such as science labs, should be cleaned before and after usage by each cohort. All lab equipment, like microscopes, should be cleaned and disinfected between student usage.
- Students and employees should sanitize or wash hands with soap after returning to the classroom from any location.

## USE OF TABLES IN CLASSROOMS

The use of multi-student tables has become prevalent in classrooms as the preferred method for providing a collaborative work environment for students. However, the current need to provide proper social distancing between students complicates classroom layouts when using tables rather than desks. The following recommendations are designed to help schools that use tables in the classroom safely configure their classrooms.



**Sample rectangular seating configuration.**



**Sample plexiglass table barrier.**

- Typical table sizes are 30" x 60" rectangular or 36" round. These tables do not provide sufficient distance between students when seated next to one another. For instance, students seated side-by-side at a 60" table will be less than two feet apart. This distance is insufficient, regardless of whether barriers are used between students. As such, alternative seating arrangements are necessary.
- Current guidance requires at least three feet of distance between students when students are seated facing the same direction. Greater distances are necessary when students are facing one another; in those cases, six feet is recommended and a minimum of five feet is required.



- As such, **36" round tables are only suitable for a single student**, regardless of configuration.
- **30" x 60" rectangular tables can seat two students so long as they are seated at the far ends of the table**, as shown in the first picture. Tables shorter than 60" can only seat one student.
- In all cases, an additional three feet of distance must be maintained around students on the remaining sides (side-to-side, back-to-back). Although all classrooms are different, typically, a classroom must be 24 feet wide to accommodate end-to-end seating at 60" rectangular tables.
- As an additional safety precaution, when practical, the use of plexiglass barriers, or similar, between students that are seated facing one another is recommended (an example is shown in the second picture). The use of solid surface materials vs. flexible materials (i.e., shower curtains) is preferred for safety reasons and ease of cleaning.
  - Any barriers should be secured to the desk, when practical, to avoid the possibility of being knocked over, particularly when used in lower grade levels.
  - Barriers should be a minimum of 24" tall.

If you have any questions or concerns regarding the layout of your classrooms relating to social distancing or other requirements, please contact your RD.

### **EARLY EDUCATION CONSIDERATIONS**

- Follow all guidelines that apply to core classrooms (see section above).
- Classroom supplies may be shared, given the unique educational practices of early education. However, supply sharing should be limited to essential use only and shared supplies should be cleaned frequently.
- Snacks: Separate students as much as possible (six feet or more). Students may remove masks, but masks should be placed in labeled paper bags (see masks section, above). Teachers should vigilantly monitor snack time to minimize student movement and prevent food sharing. Used surfaces should be cleaned immediately after snack time. Whenever possible, snack time should be outside.
- Naptime: Assign cots and bedding to individual students and do not permit sharing. Students should be spread out as much as possible. Masks may only be removed if students are at least six feet apart. Schools should consider alternate spaces for naptime to maximize distance

### **LEARNING CENTERS IN PRESCHOOL AND KINDERGARTEN CLASSROOMS**

- Masks must be worn at all times at tables and throughout the classroom.
- The set-up of learning centers in the classroom and the number of children in a learning center at one time is dependent on available space, materials, and the number of children in the cohort.
- Please remove rugs, plush and fabric toys. Hard surface toys, such as blocks, are easier to clean and disinfect.
- Classroom capacity is determined by the ability to maintain proper physical distancing throughout the classroom – at tables, in learning centers, etc. Programs should use floor markers, signs, and other tools to assist children in maintaining physical distance. Programs should also require frequent hand hygiene and increase school-wide cleaning and disinfection. Please view the ISBE/IDPH Joint Guidance for additional detail.

#### **Tables in Preschool and Kindergarten Classrooms**

1. Five- to six-foot tables are acceptable with two (2) students seated at either end without a partition.
2. If tables are four feet long, two (2) students may be seated, each at either end with a plexiglass (or other solid surface) partition in the middle. Partitions should be affixed to the table. If there are no partitions, or if the table is smaller than four feet, only one (1) child at a time may be seated at the table.

**Time spent in learning centers:** Typically, within a 60-minute block of time in the daily schedule children spend approximately 20 minutes in a center or with learning center materials and then change. The use of learning centers is acceptable under the following guidance.

### **Learning Center Options must accommodate physical distancing:**

1. Children may move freely through learning centers, but the number of children in centers must be limited.
2. Children are assigned to small groups and the groups assigned to different learning centers. Groups may rotate through the centers.
3. The learning centers come to the children. Learning center materials are divided into bins or containers and given to the students at their assigned seating.
4. A group of students may remain at assigned seating engaged with learning center materials or teacher-led activity, while the rest of children use learning centers.

### **For any of these options:**

- The sharing of common materials must be restricted as much as possible, including electronic devices, toys, books, etc.
- A minimum of three feet physical distancing is maintained, and students must have face coverings on at all times.
- Students should wash or sanitize hands before moving to the next center or material.
- The teacher or assistant should sanitize, as much as possible, the learning center materials, including table surfaces and chairs, with sanitizing wipes after use by a child or a group.
- At the end of the day, all classroom materials used by children must be cleaned and disinfected.
- Take advantage of outdoor space as much as possible during clement weather.

### **DEPARTMENTALIZED CLASSES AND MIXED INSTRUCTIONAL GROUPS**

- For departmentalized schedules (e.g., junior high programs), students should remain in their classroom for all core subjects.
- All students and staff must continue the use of masks for all classes.
- Many schools mix students from various grades/classes, such as when utilizing leveled math classes or Title I instruction. Schools should consider avoiding such mixing when possible, leveraging technology to supplement instruction when possible. If such mixing is absolutely needed, efforts should be made to distance students from different cohorts.
- Departmentalized teachers must maintain a minimum of six feet of distance when instructing students that are not in their cohort. Schools should utilize tape on the floor to clearly demark a six-foot distance between the teacher's instructional area and the closest student.

### **SPECIAL AREA CLASSES**

- Whenever possible, specials classes should be held in each cohort's homeroom classroom. This is particularly emphasized for classes such as art, music, foreign language, STEM and health. Specials teachers should attempt to come to the students, rather than students to the teacher.
- Specials teachers must maintain a minimum of six feet of distance from students in the cohort and wear a mask. Schools should utilize tape on the floor to clearly demark a six-foot distance between the teacher's instructional area and the closest student.
- If a shared classroom is used for specials classes, such as a computer lab or gym, the room must be thoroughly cleaned before the room can be used by another cohort.
- Specials teachers should minimize shared supplies amongst students (e.g., art supplies). Supplies should be cleaned between each use, particularly when used by different cohorts.
- Music classes should avoid singing or asking students to play woodwinds or brass instruments, including recorders.

- Consider moving classes outside, especially physical education classes, when possible. Avoid physical exertion when students are wearing masks.

## **BATHROOMS**

- Bathroom capacity should be restricted to three students or fewer for a typical-sized communal bathroom. Students should wear masks and remain physically distant while in bathrooms.
- Schools should post signage on bathrooms indicating that no more than three students may be present at a time.
- Students and employees should be trained on bathroom capacity and procedures.
- Capacity in bathrooms should be restricted to allow for distancing. If a school has multiple bathrooms, classes should be assigned to use specific bathrooms instead of allowing students to choose.
- **To provide for physical distancing, sinks and/or urinals in close proximity should be taped off to allow every other one only.**

## **MAIN OFFICE AND STAFF WORKROOM**

- Install physical barriers, such as sneeze guards, in the main office counter or desk area.
- Spread out seating in the main office to ensure distancing. Eliminate seating when distancing is not possible.
- Use tape on the office floor to direct traffic flow and manage any lines, ensuring proper distancing is followed.
- Teachers, administrators and staff should wear masks and maintain distancing when in the main office or staff workroom. Be mindful of high traffic areas, such as copy machines.
- Clean common surfaces multiple times per day, such as counters, desks, doorknobs and copy machines.
- Conduct parent, student and teacher meetings virtually if possible. If face-to-face meetings are required, meet in large open areas (such as unused classrooms) instead of more confined spaces (such as the principal's office). Meeting participants should wear masks and maintain distancing.

## **LUNCH**

- Cohorts must be maintained for lunch.
- Students must be separated by at least six feet while eating lunch (due to the removal of masks).
- If six-foot distancing is possible, lunch should be held in classrooms to prevent cohorts from intermingling in a cafeteria.
- Lunches may be delivered to the classrooms to avoid having students pick up lunches in a cafeteria.
- If students pick up lunches in the cafeteria, only one cohort should pick up lunch at a time and distancing must be maintained.
- Students must wash their hands or apply hand sanitizer before and after eating.
- Surfaces used for lunch should be disinfected after eating prior to resuming classroom activities.
- The cafeteria or other suitable space (e.g., gymnasium, multi-purpose room, church) may be used if proper distancing is not possible in homeroom classes. The alternative space must be cleaned and sanitized between uses. No more than 50 students can utilize the space at one time. **Students within a cohort** may sit near each other and all students, including those within cohorts, should distance as much as possible. **In a cafeteria or large room setting for lunch, different cohorts must sit far apart and not be in close proximity to one another.**

- Use disposable food service items (e.g., utensils, dishes). If disposable items are not feasible, ensure that all non-disposable food service items are handled with gloves and washed with dish soap and hot water or in a dishwasher. Individuals should wash their hands after removing their gloves or after directly handling used food service items.

## RECESS

- Schools should discourage strong physical exertion during recess when possible (recognizing that children, particularly young children, do need physical recreation).
- Recess must be scheduled so that cohorts do not intermingle with other cohorts.
- Consider assigning recess equipment to specific cohorts. If recess equipment is being used by multiple cohorts, it must be cleaned between cohort usage.
  - For stationary recess equipment (e.g., slides, swings, etc.), consider devising a schedule whereby only a single cohort may use the equipment per day. By doing so, equipment need only be cleaned daily versus multiple times per day.
- When recess is held outside, masks may be removed and stored in paper bags if distancing is maintained (see section above). **If teachers notice that students are not maintaining proper social distancing, then students should wear their masks. Teachers outside for recess should always wear their masks.**

## WATER BOTTLES

- Students and employees may bring refillable water bottles from home. Water bottles should be kept closed when not in use.
- Students and employees may take short sips of water by moving their mask aside. Assuming the sip of water is short in duration (less than 10 seconds), individuals need not remove masks entirely or separate by six feet within their cohort (they should remain separated by at least three feet, as indicated in the cohort section above).
- If masks become wet due to drinking water, they should be immediately replaced.

## SCHOOL STAFF – COHORTS

- Unless they are a homeroom teacher or instructional aide (and assigned to the cohort of their homeroom class), all other teachers and staff are considered outside a cohort. This includes such staff as special area teachers, administrators, front office staff, custodial personnel, etc. These individuals should practice distancing of at least six feet and wear masks when around others in the school building.
- School employees should not gather for lunch or other social functions. Faculty meetings, professional development and other teacher/staff gatherings should be conducted virtually whenever possible. If not, promote physical distancing of at least six feet between people if events are held. Limit group size to the extent possible.
- Parent conferences and meetings should be conducted virtually when possible. If not possible, all parties should wear masks and practice distancing.
- More specifics about staffing concerns (e.g., medical issues, travel, etc.) are covered in separate sections of this document.

## MEDICAL CARE FOR STUDENTS (NON-COVID)

- Schools may provide for the ongoing medical students, as per a normal year. This includes the administration of approved medicines and prescriptions and basic first aid with the exception of nebulizer treatments, which should not be administered at school.
- Staff should wear gloves, gowns, goggles and N95 masks when providing medical care that involves touching students. **Face shields can also be worn in addition to masks.**

- Nurses and staff should not perform clinical evaluations of students suspected of being symptomatic. When they interact with suspected symptomatic students/staff they should don the N95 masks, eye protection (goggles), gowns and gloves. Face shields can also be worn in addition to masks.

### **VISITORS AND VOLUNTEERS**

- Limit visitors to the school building as much as possible. Cancel or postpone events that involve a lot of visitors in the school (e.g., Special Persons' Day). When parents come to school, try to limit access to the main office only.
- Take the temperature of any visitor, including a parent, entering the school and ask them the same Wellness questions the students are asked each morning.
- Minimize the extended use of volunteers. If volunteers must be used for some activities, attempt to utilize regular volunteers who can serve for longer periods of time instead of several volunteers over shorter periods.
- Volunteers may be used in short intervals for arrival and dismissal but must follow school health and safety protocols.
- Keep accurate records of visitors and volunteers, including the individual's reason for visit, contact information and all locations visited, in case contact tracing is needed.

### **SCHOOL PICTURES – PICTURE DAY**

Many schools take pictures of students for the purposes of the yearbook, sending pictures to families, etc., typically as part of an organized "Picture Day." In participating in this practice, schools should follow these guidelines:

- Cohorts should not be mingled for photos (cohorts should generally go to pictures together vs. individual students).
- Physical distancing (more than six feet) with the photographer must be maintained.
- Masks may be removed by students during pictures. However, they should be placed in designated and individualized paper bags (as per our guidelines). Students must remain at least six feet distant from all others when masks are removed.
- Any surface this is touched by students during photos should be cleaned between every use.
- The photography area should be generally cleaned between cohorts.

### **STUDENT TRAVEL**

- Discourage families from travel out of town.
- Students should remain home for two weeks after traveling to another country, or to states experiencing significant COVID-19 outbreaks (as determined by the [IDPH](#)).
- Students should inform schools immediately if they display COVID-19 symptoms during the two-week period. Schools should follow the Infection Protocol, outlined below, in such cases.

### **INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS**

- Ask international students to remain at home for at least two weeks following travel to their country of origin. Students should be allowed to complete work virtually while at home.
- Students should inform schools immediately if they display COVID-19 symptoms during the two-week period. Schools should follow the Infection Protocol, outlined below, in such cases.

## SHARING SPACE WITH PARISH MINISTRIES AND OTHER EXTERNAL GROUPS

Parish ministries (such as Religious Education classes) and “external groups” (e.g., Boy Scouts) should be encouraged to use any vacant or unused instructional space if possible (including special area classrooms that are not being used). Such groups should restrict their access to required areas only. Used areas should be cleaned before and after usage by external groups.

## SPECIAL EVENTS (MASSES, ASSEMBLIES, FIELD TRIPS, ETC.)

- Large group gatherings, such as assemblies or HSA meetings, should be avoided or conducted virtually.
- Pursue virtual group events, gatherings or meetings when possible, and promote physical distancing of at least six feet between people if events are held. Limit group size to the extent possible.
- Off-site field trips are prohibited during the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Principals should work with their pastor to determine whether school Masses are practicable during the outbreak. Use the [Archdiocesan Liturgical and Sacramental Guidelines](#) to determine how/whether to conduct school Masses. As outlined in these guidelines, Masses should be streamed virtually or conducted with very small groups. If multiple cohorts are attending a Mass, cohorts should be separated (in addition to outright physical distancing). Masks should be worn during Masses. Holy Communion should **not** be taken to classrooms for students who did not attend Mass in person.

## HOLIDAY CELEBRATIONS

Many schools conduct school or class celebrations for holidays (e.g., Halloween, Thanksgiving, Christmas). While celebrations are permissible, they must adhere to the following guidelines:

- All health and safety protocols in this document must be followed (e.g., masks, distancing, cohorts, gathering restrictions, etc.).
- Food (including candy) should not be incorporated into celebration events.
- Singing and activities with significant movement should not be incorporated into celebrations. Celebration activities should avoid situations where students are physically close together or sharing materials.

Parents and visitors should not be permitted to attend holiday celebrations unless serving as a regular volunteer (as per the volunteer guidelines in this document).

## EMERGENCY DRILLS

**Emergency drills should still be conducted, as per ISBE requirements.** If a school is using only remote learning, drills may be delayed until students return to in-person instruction. However, schools providing in-person instruction or a hybrid model of both in-person and remote learning must still follow the provisions of the School Safety Drill Act. According to the School Safety Drill Act, drills shall be conducted at each school building that houses school children. That means that schools must continue to meet statutory requirements for conducting safety drills, including evacuation, bus evacuation, law enforcement, and severe weather/shelter in place drills, and should implement these drills with COVID-19 safety measures in place. Multiple drills may need to occur, and drills may take more time to allow for physical distancing. Recommendations from OCS for conducting drills safely:

- Remember that some emergency drills can be postponed to later in the year with the permission of local emergency officials.
- For all drills, have classes practice each individually by cohort to become familiar with the practices and guidance. Focus on spacing between individuals, the need to remain masked, and the importance of remaining silent so instructions can be heard.
- For evacuation drills, designate an individual to release classes/cohorts individually, allowing for separation between cohorts as they exit the building. Make sure there is available spacing for cohorts to remain separate once evacuated. If possible, utilize entry/exit doors used daily by cohorts. For the observed drill, please make the fire department aware of the COVID safety measures and the need for a controlled exit.

- For Weather/Shelter in Place, conduct these individually by cohort.
- Work with your local police department on a plan to best conduct these drills. If agreeable, drill can be held with all safety measures in place except for relocating students into a corner in the classroom.
- If bus evacuation drills are required (for schools that utilize bus services) conduct individually by cohort. Allow time between cohorts and wipe/disinfect seats and high touch areas between drills.

### **EXTENDED CARE (I.E., BEFORE- AND AFTER-SCHOOL CARE)**

- Schools should attempt to separate students from different cohorts (using extra rooms, if practical, with appropriate adult supervision).
- Students and staff must wear masks and maintain distancing. Extended care rooms should be arranged so that seating maximizes distancing. Schools should declutter extended care rooms to maximize floor space. Consider using larger multipurpose rooms or gyms for extended care to maximize distancing.
- Keep students outside as much as possible during extended care times.
- Avoid sharing any supplies or toys in extended care programs. Clean supplies and toys regularly.
- Extended care rooms must be cleaned before and after extended care use.

### **PARENT AND COMMUNITY GATHERINGS**

- In general, schools should avoid conducting face-to-face parent/community gatherings (e.g., HSA meetings, school board meetings, social events, fundraisers, etc.). Such events should be canceled or conducted virtually.
- If a principal feels a physical gathering is necessary, they should seek approval from their regional director. If an event is approved, masks and physical distancing will be required. Gatherings will be restricted to 50 or fewer individuals.

### **EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES**

Principals should use their best judgment in determining whether extracurricular activities can be conducted safely in the school setting. In some cases, it may be best to cancel or postpone an extracurricular activity or ask that the group meet virtually. Extracurricular activities must follow the school health and safety requirements set forth above, which include physical distancing, appropriate use of PPE and limiting the number of individuals in one space to 50 or fewer.

#### **Athletics**

- Summer athletics activities are cancelled.
- Fall athletics competitions are cancelled. Elementary athletic leagues may postpone fall sports into the winter or spring, if preferred (although a decision on whether winter and spring sports may occur has not yet been made).
- Practices and conditioning for fall sports are still allowable under the following conditions:
  - Schools must adhere to the state's **Fall Sports Guidelines**, which designate which sports may participate in practices or conditioning and under what circumstances.
  - Schools must abide by all other archdiocesan health/safety guidelines (e.g., masks, distancing, etc.).
  - Principals may opt to cancel fall sports practices and conditioning at their discretion.

#### **Band**

- Given the unlikelihood of large gatherings (such as band concerts) during the school year, schools may wish to consider canceling band.
- Large group practices (more than 15 students) should be conducted virtually.



- Small group practices (involving 15 or fewer students) may be conducted for **non-wind instruments only** (e.g., percussion, strings, etc.). Masks should be worn, and physical distancing should be practiced by all. Shared musical instruments should be cleaned between every use.
- Practices for wind instruments (brass and woodwinds) should be conducted virtually only.
- Band concerts should be conducted virtually when practicable. However, if conducted, concerts may have no more than 50 individuals present (both in the band and audience) and all participants should maintain physical distancing. Alternative formats, such as drive-in concerts, may be an option; seek guidance from your regional director for more information.

### **Choir, Drama/School Play, Christmas Programs**

Such programs should be canceled or conducted virtually until approved otherwise by the Office of Catholic Schools.

### **Other Extracurricular Activities (e.g., academic clubs, debate, chess, etc.)**

- Consider conducting activities virtually.
- If face-to-face meetings are necessary, masks must be worn, and physical distancing should be practiced by all.
- If the activity involves sharing a space (particularly with a homeroom class), the space should be cleaned before and after the activity's use.

## INFECTION PROTOCOL: WHAT TO DO IF SOMEONE IS SYMPTOMATIC

Schools should follow the defined infection protocols outlined in this document:

[https://archchicago.sharepoint.com/:b:/s/Intranet-HomePage/ESviM4KRDugHhWY9vh3y7EoByth8\\_3tola94vbomopwShQ?e=FKvKU4](https://archchicago.sharepoint.com/:b:/s/Intranet-HomePage/ESviM4KRDugHhWY9vh3y7EoByth8_3tola94vbomopwShQ?e=FKvKU4)

## STAFFING GUIDELINES

This section provides additional information for supporting employees during the COVID-19 pandemic. The focus of this section is on healthy employees (those not displaying COVID-19 symptoms). Please note that the Infection Protocol section provides information on how to handle specific infections of COVID-19 with employees.

This section is also meant to supplement the section on Health and Safety, which describes specific protocols for setting up classroom space, managing students, organizing the main office and staff workroom, etc. Likewise, the Academics and Programming section discusses how teachers should adjust instruction and student care.

### **EMPLOYEE TRAINING AND FAQs**

- Ensure all employees have access to the **School Employee FAQ** document.
- Ensure all staff are trained on COVID-19 response protocols, as outlined in this document. Principals and other supervisors should be available to answer questions and handle concerns about these protocols. If a principal is unable to answer an employee question, they can contact their regional director or human resource vicariate manager (HRVM).

### **EMPLOYEES IN AT-RISK GROUPS**

- Employees should inform their principal that they are part of an at-risk group for COVID-19 or have an immediate family member who is part of an at-risk group.



- Principals should determine if the work can be performed remotely. Most school staff, such as teachers, are likely unable to perform core job tasks remotely.
- Employees in a vulnerable population who are unable to perform work should be asked to talk with their healthcare providers about steps they can take to protect their health when at school. Steps may include wearing additional PPE, working in an alternative physical space, etc.
  - After talking with their healthcare provider, employees should talk with their principal about their concerns and share possible steps.
  - The principal should evaluate the practicality of the request and consult with their human resource vicariate manager (HRVM).
  - If the employee's request cannot be reasonably accommodated, the principal should explore alternatives and attempt to appropriately address the employee's health concerns while fulfilling the necessary duties. Documentation from a healthcare provider requesting any possible temporary changes to the employee's work practices or environment may be required. Please note that such requests may or may not be met, depending upon the needs of the school.
  - If an employee and principal are unable to agree upon a plan, the principal should work with their HRVM on next steps.

### **EMPLOYEES WHO FEEL ANXIOUS ABOUT RETURNING TO WORK (BUT ARE NOT PART OF AN AT-RISK GROUP)**

- Some employees may express anxiety about returning to work, even if they (or one of their immediate family members) are not part of an at-risk group (see above).
- If such situations are brought to the principal, the principal should demonstrate appropriate empathy. The principal may wish, at their discretion, to allow some/all of the employee's work to be performed remotely. However, many school roles (including most/all teachers) do require a face-to-face presence in the school.
- If a principal determines that an employee's work cannot be performed remotely, the employee should be asked to remain at work. If the employee persists with their concerns, the principal should contact their HRVM for additional instructions.

### **EMPLOYEE TRAVEL**

- Employees should avoid work-related travel (e.g., professional conferences).
- Employees should inform their supervisor if they are planning to participate in personal travel out of town.
- Principals should contact their HRVM if they learn that an employee has traveled via air or ship. The employee may be asked to quarantine depending upon the unique circumstances.
- Employees and students that travel internationally or to states with significant COVID-19 outbreaks (as determined by the CDC) must remain home for at least two weeks following their arrival home.

### **SUBSTITUTE TEACHERS**

- Communicate to all substitute teachers appropriate expectations using the letter or flier provided.
- Do not forget to include substitutes who may have been in a cohort for contact tracing. For example, if a student tests positive and it was determined a substitute teacher was teaching the cohort on the infected student's last day in school, the substitute teacher needs to be notified and included in contact tracing.
- If schools are having difficulty securing substitute teachers, they should contact their Regional Director for further resources and ideas.

## ACADEMICS AND PROGRAMMING

In addition to ongoing health and safety protocols, schools should consider what adaptations will be necessary for instruction throughout the year. Please see the original **Reopening Plan** for foundational guidance. The section below is meant to summarize guidelines throughout the year.

<b>OPEN AND OPERATING</b> (Throughout the year)	
<b>Technology and E-Learning Preparations</b>	<p>Review building infrastructure and connectivity: consider the amount of bandwidth and access points in buildings for additional devices.</p> <p>Plan for remote learning: specifically, class schedules and expectations, additional technology tools that teachers may need.</p>
<b>Socio-Emotional Learning</b>	<p>Establish daily classroom meeting routines which include greeting, prayer, sharing, and SEL activities. Include prayer or other announcements over the school PA system at the beginning and end of the day to foster a school-wide community.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• These practices should be incorporated into school-wide remote learning plans.</li> </ul> <p><b>Morning Meeting Planning Template</b></p> <p><b>Sample digital check-in using Google forms</b></p> <p>Incorporate SEL training for teachers into professional development offerings.</p>
<b>Catholic Identity</b>	<p>Include the creation of a Catholic, online presence as part of the school's remote learning plans.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure that the school's social media sites are well organized and centered on Catholic values in regular school postings during remote learning.</li> <li>• Coach teachers about how to effectively use Catholic imagery, prayers, language, and multi-media to create an e-learning homepage.</li> <li>• Consider designing a unique virtual space dedicated to student sharing about faith and Catholic values in remote learning.</li> </ul> <p>Encourage teachers to hang a crucifix or have other Catholic images visible in pictures and/or recordings of remote lessons. Support teachers in creating a prayer corner or prayer wall for students to see and utilize as part of remote learning lessons.</p>
<b>Curriculum Planning</b>	<p>Continue to develop pacing guides/curriculum maps for the entire year at a minimum for English language arts, math and religion.</p>
<b>Use of Assessments</b>	<p>Continue to review data as a whole school from local assessments that include i-Ready and other formative tools to assist in identifying student progress. Limit the specific amount or weighting of items like homework and classwork that do not assess student understanding of material or standards and only serve as unrelated work and practice of non-essential content.</p>
<b>Re-Entry Orientation</b>	<p>Practice as needed to ensure proper handwashing, sanitizing, movement around the building and other protocols.</p> <p>Discuss among teachers the proper reactions for non-compliance with established protocols.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Emphasize that while said behavior is not acceptable, students should be provided opportunities to practice, model and correct behavior without punitive consequences.</li> </ul>

<b>Inclusive Education</b>	Continue to update Student Support Plans for students with disabilities to include both in-person and remote learning accommodations and modifications. <b>For more information on inclusive education resources</b>
<b>English Language Learners</b>	Continue to ensure that all <b>high-level communication is translated to meet the needs of the school community.</b> <b>Consider best practice strategies for remote learning for ELL students.</b> <b>Identify specific activities, texts and engagement strategies.</b> <b>For more information on ELL resources</b>
<b>Early Childhood Resources</b>	<b>For more information on early childhood resources</b>

## TUITION GUIDELINES

### GENERAL PRINCIPLE

Generally speaking, tuition collection should continue as normal during the school year. There are generally two reasons why families may convey concerns about paying tuition. These are an **inability to pay** due to legitimate financial hardship, and an **unwillingness to pay** due to COVID-19 adaptations, quarantines (at the cohort or school level) or a family choice to remain at home. Both scenarios are outlined below.

### GUIDELINES FOR FAMILIES UNABLE TO PAY DUE TO FINANCIAL HARDSHIP

You should first verify the legitimacy of the need, if possible, through an employment document (e.g., layoff letter). You should use your good judgment in determining the validity of the need. If you feel that the need is sincere, take the following steps as appropriate:

#### If the hardship is temporary:

- Defer payment of some/all tuition for the duration of the closure/hardship. A postponement of payments is possible through FACTS if FACTS is notified within 2–3 business days of a scheduled payment. For more information, **see these guidelines from FACTS** or contact FACTS directly. We recommend this in any instances requiring ETA so that we have time to determine the impact of the COVID-19 crisis.

#### If the hardship is longer-term:

- If your school maintains a funded scholarship program, provide support to the family through local scholarship funds.
- If the school does not have access to local scholarship funds, apply for relief through the Emergency Tuition Assistance Fund (ETA) (which now also includes funds from the Archdiocese of Chicago Coronavirus Emergency Fund). Please be aware that our funds are limited, and applications are many, so we may not be able to fulfill all requests.

Note that the process for COVID-19 relief comes from both the school and the family. You should provide the following link to any family requesting COVID-19 relief: **COVID-19 Emergency Tuition Assistance Request Form**. The school should then submit an **ETA application** for any family requesting aid. For more information on the application process, contact Clare Sullivan, director of scholarships, at [csullivan@archchicago.org](mailto:csullivan@archchicago.org).

**NOTE: DO NOT discount tuition for any family before going through the ETA process.** While this differs from our traditional tuition discounting guidance, our schools and the archdiocese are facing significant financial pressures due to COVID-19 impact. The current challenges require that we manage this situation together, so we ask that all family needs other than deferment route through the ETA scholarship process.

**We should work hard to ensure that no family is forced to leave our schools due to legitimate financial hardship created by the COVID-19 infection.**

## **GUIDELINES FOR FAMILIES WHO ARE UNWILLING TO PAY TUITION**

Some families may express an unwillingness to pay tuition due to COVID-19 adaptations, quarantines or families that have chosen to remain at home.

Principals should respond to concerns on a case-by-case basis (versus sending out a mass communication to all parents). Tuition discounts or rebates are not recommended. Principals and/or other staff (e.g., pastors, business managers) should talk individually to each family. In this discussion, they can utilize some/all of the following talking points:

- Impress upon the family that productive learning is still taking place.
- Remind the family that the archdiocese has committed to continue paying teachers and staff members during the closure. As such, these funds are still needed.
- Remind them that they signed a tuition contract and we feel that this contract is still being fulfilled by the school.
- Remind them that attendance in grades k–8 is required by the state. If they withdraw from the school or are asked to leave due to non-payment of tuition, they would need to enroll in a local public school for the remainder of the school year. This point does not apply to preschool.

### **OTHER FEES:**

Schools typically collect fees for a variety of reasons (e.g., athletics, technology, etc.). If a fee has been collected for an activity that has been directly impacted by COVID-19 adaptations the school may consider a refund, discount or credit. For example, if schools collected a fee for the school play, but the play will not take place, schools should likely return the fee.

Schools should not refund, discount or credit fees that were not significantly impacted by COVID-19 adaptations. For example, many schools collect a technology fee; as most students are presumably engaged in technology usage during e-learning, this fee should still be in effect.

As fee structures vary school-by-school, feel free to contact your RD or DVO/DTO if you have any questions.