

RETURN-TO-SCHOOL PLAN

2021 - 2022

St. Ann
Classical Academy



INTRODUCTION

At the end of the last school year, the hope of COVID restrictions being a thing of the past seemed promising. Unfortunately, the rise of the Delta variant has necessitated the continuation of certain pandemic protocols. Following the directives issued by the State of New Jersey Departments of Education and Health (*The Road Forward*) and the Office of Schools of the Diocese of Metuchen, St. Ann Classical Academy (SACA) will observe the preventive and protective practices as presented in this reopening plan. As experience has taught us, there is a certain fluidity in dealing with the COVID -19 virus and as such SACA reserves the right to adapt and modify this document as the situation warrants.

Statement of the Schools Office of the Diocese of Metuchen

The Diocese of Metuchen Office of Schools is actively engaged in assisting Catholic schools as they prepare to continue safe in-school learning for all students in the 2021-22 school year. Guidance developed by the Office of Schools considers input from elementary and high school principals and teachers, the diocesan Task Force and guidelines established by the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) and the NJ Departments of Health and Education. Plans build on successes and lessons learned from 2020-2021. Priorities remain the same: To maintain the health and safety of students and teachers, sustain the Catholic communities that are so important to the success and development of our students, and continue provide a rigorous academic program for all students. An important goal is to ensure that all students can participate in school fully in-person safely with as little absence due to COVID-19 as possible.

HEALTH AND SAFETY

Vaccinations

According to the CDC, being vaccinated for COVID -19 is the most effective public health strategy for the prevention of the spread of the COVID virus. Safe and effective vaccines that are morally permissible for Catholics to receive are readily available. St. Ann Classical Academy supports the use of COVID -19 vaccines for all adults and children twelve-years-old and up.

The following websites offer guidance on the COVID- 19 Vaccine and the response of the Catholic Church:

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

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

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

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On August 23, 2021 Governor Murphy issued Executive Order 253 (<https://nj.gov/infobank/eo/056murphy/pdf/EO-253.pdf>) which now sets the policy for vaccinations in all New Jersey schools. This requires that anyone working in a New Jersey school must be vaccinated by October 18, 2021. This includes: all teachers, full or part-time, all substitutes, aides, clerical workers, cafeteria workers, maintenance staff--anyone in the school including any parent volunteers. If an employee chooses not to be vaccinated, that person must undergo COVID testing on a weekly basis. The Executive Order pertains to all schools, public, private and parochial. The schools of the Diocese of Metuchen will comply with this directive. In consultation with the school nurse, SACA will design a method for gathering proof of vaccine or the proof of the weekly COVID test. Details will be sent out in a separate communication. Proof of testing will begin no later than October 18, 2021.

COVID- 19 Information

The NJ Department of Health provides updated information on the COVID- 19 virus. The following website will be used by SACA for current information on the virus:

<https://www.nj.gov/health/cd/topics/ncov.shtml>

Mask Requirements

Pursuant to Executive Order 251 of August 6, 2021

(<https://nj.gov/infobank/eo/056murphy/pdf/EO-251.pdf>) masks will be required of all students, staff members and visitors to SACA for the start of the 2021 – 2022 school year.

The following are exceptions to the mask mandate:

- When wearing a mask would inhibit the individual's health, such as when the individual is exposed to extreme heat indoors
- When the individual has trouble breathing, is unconscious, incapacitated or otherwise unable to remove a face covering without assistance
- When a student's documented medical condition or disability, as reflected in an Individualized Education Program (IEP) or Educational Plan pursuant to Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, precludes use of a face covering
- When the individual is under two years of age
- When an individual is engaged in an activity that cannot be performed while wearing a mask, such as eating and drinking or playing an instrument
- When the individual is engaged in high-intensity aerobic or anerobic activity.

Exceptions to wearing masks will not be made on the basis of personal preference or concerns about negative consequences of wearing masks. A total exemption from the mask requirement will only be permitted with the completion of the Physician's Certification Form. Please contact Mrs. Albright at the SACA office to obtain a copy of this form. Please note that vaccinated individuals will also need to wear a mask in school.

At whatever time Executive Order 251 is rescinded, SACA will implement a mask optional policy, leaving the decision about whether to wear a mask to each family.

Additional Safety Measures

In addition to the above safety measures SACA will continue the following practices from last year:

- All members of the school community will take regular breaks throughout the school day for hand sanitizing and washing.
- Attending to practices that will increase ventilation, maximizing the circulation of fresh air in the classrooms.
- Maintaining a distance of 3 feet between students in the classrooms.
- Limit the sharing of materials and supplies.
- Regular cleaning and disinfecting of common areas and frequently used objects.
- Disinfecting of all classrooms at the end of each day
- Maintaining appropriate social distancing when students may not be wearing masks (e.g., during lunch in the cafeteria, during gym class, when engaged in outdoor activities).
- The hot lunch program will be available for the new school year. Students will have assigned seats in the cafeteria which will be appropriately distanced from each other. Lunches will be delivered in individual cartons as was done last year.

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 DISINFECTATION MEASURES

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

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General Used Objects	Handles, light switches, sinks, restrooms	Several times a day
Common Areas	Cafeteria, Library, Conference rooms, Gyms, Common Areas	At the end of each use/day; between groups

Hand sanitizing stations with alcohol-based hand sanitizers (at least 60% alcohol) will be available:

- In each classroom for staff and older children who can safely use hand sanitizer (two per classroom).
- At entrances and exits of buildings.
- Near all lavatories.
- Students will be instructed to 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.

Special considerations for the primary grades, when possible:

- 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
 - 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

COVID- 19 SCREENING

SACA will not be doing daily temperature checks when students/staff arrive each day. Given that parents have the primary obligation to monitor the health of their children on a daily basis, SACA requests that before leaving for school, parents check the temperature of their child(ren). **IF THE YOUR CHILD HAS A FEVER OR IS VOMITING, PLEASE DO NOT SEND THE STUDENT TO SCHOOL.** The basic rule of thumb for the year should be: **"If you feel sick, stay home."**

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COVID-19 symptoms may include any of the following:

- Cough
- Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing
- Chills
- Repeated shaking with chills
- Muscle pain
- Headache
- Sore throat
- Loss of taste or smell
- Diarrhea
- Feeling feverish or a measured temperature greater than or equal to 100.0 degrees Fahrenheit
- Known close contact with a person who is lab confirmed to have COVID-19

EXCLUSION

Response to Symptomatic Students and Staff

Anyone who becomes ill (student, teacher, or other staff member) while in school will report to the Nurse's Office. The Nurse's Office has a COVID-19 Isolation Room that will be used for anyone manifesting symptoms of the COVID virus.

In the cases of student illness, the parents will be contacted by the school nurse. Students that are awaiting COVID-19 results may not report to school until the results are in and negative for COVID-19. If the test is negative, it is required that the student will remain absent from school until they are fever free without fever reducing medication for 24 hours and other symptoms disappear.

Duration of Exclusion from School

- Symptomatic individuals who have not been tested or have tested POSITIVE must stay home for 10 calendar days after symptom onset and at least 24 hours have passed after resolution of fever without fever reducing medications and improvement in symptoms.
- Asymptomatic individuals who have tested POSITIVE must stay home for 10 calendar days from the date of the positive test.
- Individuals with an alternate diagnosis (including Strep and Flu), should also be tested for COVID- 19 as well. If the individual cannot provide the school with a negative COVID- 19 test result, he/she must remain home for 10 calendar days.

COVID-19 Close Contact Exclusion Criteria:

According to the CDC, close contact is defined as being within 6 feet of someone with suspected or known COVID-19 for 15 or more minutes during a 24-hour period. In certain situations, it may be difficult to determine whether individuals have met this criterion and an entire cohort, classroom, or other group may need to be considered exposed. The date of exposure is always considered day 0.

Exposed Close Contacts who are fully vaccinated and have no COVID-like symptoms Do NOT need to quarantine or be excluded from school. However, they should continue to monitor their health. Proof of vaccination will be required in this situation. When contact tracing is necessary, the school nurse will contact the parent requesting a copy of the student's proof of vaccination if applicable. This information will be kept confidential.

Re-admittance Procedures After Recovery From COVID:

If a case of Covid -19 is confirmed, decisions on how to proceed are under the direction of public health officials. These officials will also give guidance on how staff members or students are readmitted to the school after recovering from the virus. In addition to the procedures that may be required by public health departments, SACA will require a written notice from the physician of the student/staff member. The school nurse will then review all documentation. After this review the nurse will present her recommendations to the Head of School who, after consultation with the two faculty members of the Reopening Task Force, will then make the final decision for readmittance to the school.

COMMUNICATION WITH FAMILIES

In order to stay updated on the most current information we ask that everyone in the school community do the following:

1. Teachers, students, and parents should check their email often.
2. Visit the school website
3. Follow our social media platforms
4. Regularly check PowerSchool Student Information System
5. Check to see that your information for the SwiftK12 system is current. (SwiftK-12 replaces the Honeywell Alert System previously used by SACA. Instructions on setting up SwiftK12 accounts will be sent home in September.)

REMOTE LEARNING

SACA will only provide in-person instruction for the 2021 – 2022 school year. There will be no option for remote learning on an ongoing basis. Temporary remote learning will be available for students in grades K-12 if the school confirms that they are advised to quarantine according to public health guidelines or if they test positive for COVID-19. In the event a student needs to quarantine, assignments will be posted using Google Classroom.

Virtual learning sessions will use either Google Meet or Zoom. There will be a waiting period of 1-3 days to begin live temporary remote learning so that teachers can properly prepare for students to join their classes remotely. Temporary remote learning will not be available for any reason other than close contact or a positive COVID-19 test. **Students who are out sick with COVID-19 symptoms but do not yet have test results will not have access to live remote learning.** Temporary live remote learning will not be available for students who are home sick for non-COVID reasons, for students who travel, or for any other reason.

As we did last year, SACA is making every effort to have in-person learning available for the entire academic year. However, should there be multiple confirmed cases of COVID-19 in the school, after consulting with local health officials and the Office of Catholic Schools, SACA may decide to close temporarily. It is also a possibility that SACA may be subject to an order to close due to the substantial progression of the virus in the region or state. If these circumstances occur, student will transition to remote learning. Please note that the 1-3 days waiting period to begin remote instruction applies here as well. In this case all policies and procedures in the SACA Virtual Learning Plan will be in effect.

CONCLUSION

While there was good hope at the end of last year that we would be able to get back to a normal school year for 2021-2022, this will not be the case at least for the time being. While there are many diverging thoughts on how best to respond to the pandemic, there is one thing we should all keep in mind. A bedrock of Catholic social teaching is the notion of the common good. Regardless of our personal and individual opinions we should all be able to agree that what is paramount is the health and safety of our teachers, staff, children and their families. SACA will continue to follow the guidance offered us by the Diocese of Metuchen and will fully implement those policies. As we begin this new school year, let us resolve to work together for the common good and practice kindness and charity to all. May the words of the Prophet Micah remind us of the way we are called to live as disciples of Jesus in the world today: *You have been told, O mortal, what is good, and what the LORD requires of you: Only to do justice and to love goodness, and to walk humbly with your God.* (Micah 6:8).

School Reopening Taskforce

Fr. Peter Cebulka, C.O.	Head of School
Mrs. Kelly Albright	School Secretary
Mr. Lou Falconeri	Plant Manager
Deacon Sal Bonfiglio	Business Manager
Ms. Janice Genetti	School Nurse
Mrs. Ann Warger	Upper School Faculty
Mrs. Laura Condo	Lower School Faculty
Mr. William Helmstetter	Upper School Parent
Mrs. Krista Reid	Lower School Parent
Br. Steven Bolton, C.O.	The Oratory

Thank you to the taskforce members for their input in the creation of this document. Their time and talent are greatly appreciated.

SOURCES

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

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