



CATHOLIC
COMMUNITY SCHOOLS
teaching, sharing and living the Gospel

Responsible Reopening Plan

August 10, 2020



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Dear Parents, Staff, and Faculty:

After weeks of discussion with many stakeholders, including members of our Principal School Working Group, a thorough review of the federal and state guidelines for school reopening, and an evaluation of what works best for our students, we want to start the school year with our students returning to in-person settings—safely. If the current positive public health metrics hold, we believe that when we follow critical health requirements as outlined in this document, we can safely return to in-person school this fall.

Part of our responsibility as educators, administrators, and parents is to do all that we can to help our children in this difficult time. As we all know, there is no substitute for the attention and engagement that is only possible with in-person learning. We can mitigate the risks associated with COVID-19 for in-person school programs and prevent the significant consequences of keeping students out of school and isolated. It will take all of us working together to make this successful.

In the plan that follows, CCS is providing initial guidance for school reopening this fall that prioritizes student safety by following a comprehensive set of health and safety requirements. CCS is requiring each school to plan for in-person learning, distance-learning, and a hybrid model that combines in-person and distance-learning should local conditions change this fall or winter.

The fall reopening guidance comes from a place of deep care and concern, with a focus on adhering to [Minnesota Department of Health guidelines](#) and coordination with local public health authorities.

I look forward to working together for our children's individual and collective success in the school year ahead.

By His Grace,



Scott Warzecha

President

CATHOLIC COMMUNITY SCHOOLS

Our Goal For This Fall

Our goal for the fall is to safely bring back our students to in-person school settings, to optimize learning and address our students' holistic needs.

There is a clear consensus from both education and medical groups: *we must keep in mind not only the risks associated with COVID-19 for in-person school programs, but also the known challenges and consequences of keeping students out of school.*

While distance-learning has improved over the course of our school closures, there is no substitute for in-person instruction when it comes to the quality of students' academic learning. In-person school plays an equally important role in our ability to support students' social-emotional needs, including their mental and physical health, and in mitigating the impacts of trauma. We also recognize how disruptive school closures have been to families trying to maintain regular work schedules and manage household needs, including childcare, while also facilitating distance-learning.

Moreover, in light of recent events and a national movement to fight for racial justice, it is even more critical that our students are able to quickly return to robust learning opportunities and a supportive school environment, through which we can engage in meaningful discussions on anti-racism, provide mental health supports, and help to prepare our young people to bring about the changes our world desperately needs.

In research by the Center for Disease Control, MN Department of Health, Minnesota Department of Education, American Academy of Pediatrics, and agreement among infectious disease physicians, we were heartened to learn that – based on current data and research – the medical community supports the return of our students to in-person learning, with appropriate health and safety guardrails in place.

Most of us are now quite familiar with the critical health and safety practices that reduce the risk of transmission of COVID-19. These include rigorous hygiene and hand washing, use of masks/face coverings, physical distancing, reducing interaction between groups, staying home when sick, protecting those most vulnerable to the disease, and expanding testing and tracing capabilities, among others.

However, what can often get lost in long lists of practices is that it is not one mitigation strategy, but a combination of all these strategies taken together that will substantially reduce the risk of transmission. In other words, establishing a culture of health and safety in our schools that focuses on regularly enforcing these important practices is more important than any one measure.

Planning for Fall

CCS schools have developed contingency plans to prepare for the 2020-21 school year using the three scenarios described below:

Scenario 1: In-person learning model.

In this scenario, students will be back in school for in-person learning, but parents will have the option to choose distance-learning for their child if they prefer. We will create as much space between students and teachers as is feasible during the day, but will not be held strictly to enforcing 6 feet of physical distance during primary instructional time in the classroom.

This scenario is the likely reopening model if Minnesota and local COVID-19 metrics continue to stabilize and/or improve.

Scenario 2: Hybrid learning model with strict physical distancing and capacity limits.

In this scenario, our schools will provide simultaneous distance-learning and in-person learning. We will limit the overall number of people in schools to 50% maximum occupancy. Sufficient physical distancing with at least 6 feet between people will occur at all times. If distancing cannot be achieved in a space, the number of occupants will be reduced.

Scenario 3: Distance-learning model only.

In this scenario, schools will be closed and students will learn through online methods from home. This scenario may be implemented if local, regional, or statewide COVID-19 metrics worsen significantly enough to require the suspension of in-person learning. Scenario 3 may also be implemented within a school if they experience clusters of cases within a classroom or the school.

Unlike the spring of 2020, teachers are expected to conduct distance-learning from their classroom, not their homes, unless school disinfecting is in process. The school principal may deviate from this practice at their discretion in cases of underlying physical or mental health reasons. During distance-learning, in addition to following the established COVID-19 health protocols (entry screening, mask wearing, etc.), all teachers and visitors will be required to sign-in and sign-out of the facility.

Future decisions to increase or loosen restrictions and to shift between scenarios will be made in consult with Stearns County Public Health Department if COVID-19 metrics at the local, regional, or state level worsen or improve.

Meal Program

A contactless pick up and/or delivery of meals and school materials will be made available for those enrolled in our free and reduced meal program. Meals will be made available in all scenarios.

Childcare and Afterschool Care

If your school is currently operating a school-age before/after school care program, the school will maintain it for critical workers in all three scenarios with appropriate safety protocols. Before/after school care programs will be available to ALL families if we are operating under scenario 1.

Preschool

If your school is currently operating a preschool program, it will continue to offer an in-person program the entire year with appropriate safety protocols, regardless of which scenario your school is operating under.

Section 1 – Operational Practices

As of the date of this plan, the health and safety practices will enable the safe reopening of CCS schools for in-person learning this fall. These requirements will be modified as needed during the summer and into the fall.

In some cases, this plan contains safety and hygiene practices and protocols that are more restrictive than the scenarios established by Minnesota Department of Education. CCS will not choose to implement plans that are less restrictive.

COVID-19 Program Coordinator

The principal or the principal’s designee shall be the point of contact for each school building in all matters relating to COVID-19. They will communicate concerns, challenges, and lessons learned related to COVID-19, provide instructions and training on preventive safety measures as detailed in this plan, and perform necessary communications to staff, students/families, CCS leadership, and local health officials.

Onsite Reviews

In support of the school principals, a CCS employee or outside consultant will perform periodic onsite reviews of school facilities to help verify adherence to the practices described herein. These visits may be planned or unannounced, and any concerns will be reported immediately to the school’s COVID-19 Program Coordinator.

COVID Preparedness Training

Training will be provided to all staff and faculty, teacher substitutes, volunteers, and temporary workers about protections and protocols, including:

- Physical distancing protocols and practices.
- Drop-off, pick-up, delivery, and general in-school visiting.
- Practices for hygiene and respiratory etiquette.
- Requirements regarding the use of masks, face-coverings and/or face-shields.

Staff, students, and families will be educated about the signs and symptoms of COVID-19, when they/their children should stay home and when they may return to school.

As COVID-19 program coordinator, the building principal or their designee(s) will monitor how effectively the practices and protocols have been implemented. All employees are to take an active role and collaborate in carrying out the various aspects of this plan, keeping updated on protections, protocols, work-practices and training as necessary.

Drop-Off and Pick-Up

We will institute a system for drop-off and pick-up that keeps families at least six feet from each other and reduces their need to enter the school. This may include staggering drop-off and pick-up times for various groups, one-way traffic flows, greeting students at their vehicle, or placing distancing markers on walkways. Your school will communicate their specific, detailed plan with you.

Health Screening at Entry

Designated school personnel will take temperatures and check for signs of illness of all staff, students and visitors upon entering school. Please do not administer Tylenol or any other fever reducing medications to your child prior to sending them to school. Anyone with flu-like symptoms must stay home.

Prior to bringing your child to school, please go through the following morning checklist:

- **Has your child had a fever of 100.4°F or higher, or a sense of having a fever, in the past three days (72 hours)?** If yes, keep home and watch for other symptoms below.
- **Has your child had two or more of the following symptoms in the past three days (72 hours)?** If yes, keep home and look into having your child tested for COVID-19.
 - Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing
 - Sore throat
 - Chills
 - New loss of taste or smell
 - Muscle or body aches
 - Nausea/vomiting/diarrhea
 - Congestion/running nose – not related to seasonal allergies
 - Unusual fatigue

- o Severe Headache

- **Has anyone in your household had any of the above symptoms in the last three days (72 hours)?** If yes, keep your child home and look into having those who are symptomatic tested for COVID-19.
- **Has your child been in recent close contact with anyone with suspected or confirmed COVID-19?** If yes, your child will be required to quarantine for 14 days before returning to school.
- **Has anyone in your household traveled internationally in the past 14 days?** If yes, your child will be required to quarantine for 14 days before returning to school.

If the answer to any of the above is yes, call your school to inform them.

If the answer to all of the above is no, your child is permitted to attend school.

Travel

We ask that our CCS families, faculty and staff use good judgment and try to limit any nonessential travel within the states. Students, teachers, staff or visitors who have traveled internationally within the past 14 days will be automatically prohibited from entering the school. Students may return to school if they remain symptom-free after 14 days. For the duration that they are at home, they will be expected to attend school using distance-learning methods.

COVID-19 Related Isolation Space

To minimize transmission of COVID-19, we will have an isolated space available for students displaying COVID-19 symptoms that is separate from the nurse's office or other space where routine medical care is provided. Anyone who shows COVID-19 symptoms during the school day will be moved to this designated space until they can be picked up by a family member.

In addition to masks/face coverings, additional safety precautions are required for school nurses and/or any staff supporting students in isolation spaces when distance is not possible. These precautions may include eye protection (e.g., face shield or goggles), gloves and disposable gowns or washable outer layers of clothing depending on the duration of contact, especially if the individual may come into close contact with bodily fluids.

Physical Distancing

Physical distancing (also called social distancing) means keeping space between yourself and other people outside of your home. Physical distancing is a critical tool in decreasing the spread of COVID-19.

- Students and staff will be kept in small cohort groups that stay together as much as possible throughout the day and from day to day. Separation between cohort groups shall be practiced as is feasible (e.g., during lunch in the cafeteria, bathroom breaks, arrival and dismissal, free periods, recess, etc.).
- Physical distance floor/seating markings in waiting and reception areas will be added.
- In grades PreK-6, students will be supervised to ensure physical distancing and will remain within their cohorts at all times. In grades 7-12, staff will monitor areas where there are greater opportunities for exposure (especially when students are around each other for 15 minutes or more) to ensure mask wearing and physical distancing of at least 6 feet between people whenever possible.

Physical Distancing Special Considerations.

As circumstances dictate, schools in CCS will consider other physical distancing strategies such as:

- Cancelling or modifying Mass, worship services, field trips, assemblies, and other large gatherings.
- Converting parent interactions, including parent conferences, to virtual meetings.
- Suspending or making significant modifications to activities that are considered high risk, such as choir or other classes or activities that require students to remove face coverings and may contribute to transmission of COVID-19. Alternatively, we may hold them outdoors or in a large well-ventilated space and with fewer people than usual to allow even greater physical distance between students. We will ensure that families understand these activities are high risk.
- Reducing the number of students in the halls at one time by staggering the release of classes.
- Limiting activities where multiple classrooms interact.
- Staggering arrival and/or dismissal times.

- Reducing congestion in the health office. For example, we may use the health office for children with flu-like symptoms and a satellite location for first aid or medication distribution.
- Limiting nonessential visitors (e.g. volunteers for classroom activities, mystery readers, cafeteria support, and other activities.)
- Limiting cross-school transfer for special programs. For example, if students are brought from multiple schools for special programs (e.g., music, robotics, speech therapy, academic clubs), we will consider using distance-learning to deliver the instruction or temporarily offer duplicate programs in the participating schools.
- Teaching staff, students, and their families to maintain distance from each other in the school.
- Keeping students outside more as weather and space permits.

Classroom Configuration

We will seek to maximize physical distance between desks and tables within their physical and operational constraints.

In scenario 2, classroom seating will be arranged so that students are separated from one another by 6 feet. If it is not possible to arrange seating 6 feet apart, alternative spaces in the school (e.g., cafeteria and library) may be repurposed to increase the amount of available space to accommodate the 6 feet requirement.

Facility Safety Precautions

We will implement facility precautions to minimize risk to all, such as the following:

- 6 feet of spacing will be marked on the floors to remind people to always stay 6 feet apart in lines and at other times they may congregate (e.g., during lunch, arrival and dismissal, restrooms, locker areas, etc.).
- Center of hallways and directional arrows will be added to remind people to always maintain a one-way traffic pattern and physical distance.
- Frequent reminders will be issued to students and staff (e.g. to stay at least 6 feet apart from one another when feasible, how to practice COVID hygiene procedures, and the importance of adherence to regularly practicing these procedures.)

- Self-service food or beverage distribution in the cafeteria will be discontinued.
- Water fountains without bottle fillers will be disabled. Water bottle filling stations may be added to the extent possible. Everyone is asked to bring a full bottle of water to school.
- The use of transparent dividers (e.g., plexiglass) to separate individuals will be considered for reception desks and other areas where physical distancing is not feasible.
- Common areas will be reconfigured, spacing out furniture to minimize crowding.
- Common seating areas will be closed off when it is observed that physical distancing is routinely compromised. Multiple groups will not be admitted into common areas.
- Ventilation systems will be inspected for proper operation and we will increase circulation of outdoor air as much as possible.

Meals and Snacks

If using the cafeteria, we will have students sit with their cohort (class or group) and ensure physical distance between students and between groups. Meal times in the cafeteria will be staggered. Student flow will be arranged to reduce crowding at handwashing sinks and food vending areas. Additionally:

- No sharing of food or drink will be allowed.
- The staff (not students) will handle utensils and serve food to reduce the spread of germs.
- We will clean and sanitize tables before and after each group eats.
- In-classroom snacks will be individually packaged, whenever possible. Where individual packaging is not possible, food and beverages will be served directly to students.

To minimize the risk even further, we will consider grab-and-go meal services where students take their meals outside or to their classroom, or having meals delivered to classes.

Section 2—Health and Wellbeing

Cloth Face Coverings and Face Shields

In accordance to Governor Walz's [Executive Order 20-81](#), as of July 25, 2020, masks are required indoors in public spaces in Minnesota. This includes public and nonpublic school buildings. For more information about face coverings and face shields, see [page 6 of the MDH K-12 planning guidance](#).

We will follow face covering requirements under [Executive Order 20-81](#) for Kindergarten through grade twelve. Our preschools will follow the guidance available at [Masking Recommendations for Child Care: COVID-19](#).

We will:

- teach and reinforce the use of cloth face coverings for students and staff throughout the school day, including on transportation vehicles, inside school buildings, and generally when on school grounds.
- have a small supply of disposable or cloth face coverings available for staff and students who forget to bring their own.

Guidance for our licensed childcare preschool programs:

- Staff must wear masks or face shields in communal areas where groups may intermix.
- Staff who work with more than one group of kids must wear a mask at all times.
- Staff are recommended to wear masks in classrooms if physical distance cannot be maintained.

Guidance for K-12:

- Masks are required for all students, staff, teachers over the age of 5.

Masks can be removed and replaced with a face shield if:

- a mask would impede the educational process (teachers only).
- a student cannot tolerate a mask or face shield due to a developmental, behavioral or medical condition.
- a staff member cannot tolerate a mask.
- a mask impedes the services being delivered (staff).

Masks and face shields can be removed temporarily in the following circumstances:

- during physical activity that is impeded by using a mask.
- during outdoor activities and classes held outside.

- while eating or drinking.
- while checking identification.
- staff working alone in a classroom or office.
- staff working behind a plexiglass barrier.
- staff working with a person who has a disability where a face covering impedes communication.

Face coverings will not be required for:

- Children ages 5 and under.
- Anyone who has trouble breathing or is unconscious.
- Anyone who is incapacitated or otherwise unable to remove the face covering without assistance.
- Anyone who cannot tolerate a cloth face covering due to developmental, medical, or behavioral health needs.

Handwashing and Hand Sanitizing

Handwashing removes pathogens from the surface of the hands. While handwashing with soap and water is the best option, alcohol-based hand sanitizer may be used when handwashing is not available.

- o **Handwashing:** When handwashing, individuals will use soap and water to wash all surfaces of their hands for at least 20 seconds, wait for visible lather, rinse thoroughly, and dry with an individual disposable towel.
- o **Hand sanitizing:** If handwashing is not feasible, hand sanitizer with at least 60 percent ethanol or at least 70 percent isopropanol content will be used. Hand sanitizer should be applied to all surfaces of the hands and in sufficient quantity that it takes 20 seconds of rubbing hands together for the sanitizer to dry. Hand sanitizer will be placed at key locations (e.g., building entrances, cafeteria, classrooms).

As has always been the case, handwashing is required whenever hands are visibly soiled and after using the bathroom. Additionally, students and staff will be required to exercise hand hygiene (handwashing or sanitizing) upon arrival to school, before eating, after recess, before putting on and taking off masks, and before dismissal.

We will:

- Ensure the availability of appropriate supplies to support healthy hygiene behaviors (e.g., soap, hand sanitizer, paper towels, disinfectant wipes, and tissues).
- Strategically place supplies in areas where they may be frequently used.

- Have processes to frequently check and refill supplies at the point of use (e.g., hand sanitizer available near shared equipment, hand sanitizer near school building entrances/exits, etc.).
- Build routines of hand hygiene into the daily school schedule for all students and staff, including handwashing and sanitation breaks during or between classroom activities.
- Supervise the use of hand sanitizer by students.
- Ensure that children and staff with sensitivity or skin reactions to hand sanitizer can use soap and water.
- Reinforce handwashing during key times, including but not limited to: arrival and dismissal; before, during, and after preparing or eating food; after using the bathroom; after blowing one's nose, coughing, or sneezing; after touching objects with bare hands that have been handled by other people.

Shared Hands-On Teaching and Library Materials

- We will clean and sanitize hands-on materials often and after each use. We will limit shared teaching materials to those we can easily clean and sanitize or disinfect. Children's books and other paper-based materials are not high risk for spreading the virus and will not need to be cleaned.
- We will clean and sanitize toys, equipment, and high-touch surfaces in the program space (e.g. doorknobs, handles, check-in counters, keyboards and electronics.)

Health and Safety/PPE Supplies

Insofar as possible given the supply chain in the community, schools will maintain a two-month supply of standard healthcare supplies (e.g. masks and gloves; sanitizers and disinfectants; tissues and paper towels).

Protecting Vulnerable Populations

The CDC considers the following individuals to be at high risk for severe illness due to COVID-19:

- Individuals who are 65 years and older.

- Individuals with underlying medical conditions, including:
 - Chronic lung disease or moderate to severe asthma
 - Serious heart conditions
 - Comprised immune systems
 - Severe obesity (body mass index of 40 or higher)
 - Diabetes
 - Chronic kidney disease undergoing dialysis
 - Liver disease
 - Hemoglobin disorder

Students/families and staff will self-identify as high risk for illness due to COVID-19.

We will:

- offer distance-learning to enrolled students who may be medically vulnerable or otherwise unwilling to return to in-person or hybrid learning.
- offer reasonable accommodations such as additional PPE or work reassignments for staff who may be medically vulnerable or otherwise unwilling to return to in-person or hybrid learning.
- offer other opportunities for volunteers to assist with school operations and programs if desired for those volunteers who may be medically vulnerable.

Daily Monitoring for Illness

Regular screening for symptoms and ongoing self-monitoring throughout the school day can help to quickly identify signs of illness and help reduce exposure.

We will educate staff, students, and families about the signs and symptoms of COVID-19, and when they/their children should stay home, as well when they can return to school.

We will conduct periodic symptom screening for staff, students, family members, and any other visitors in the school during the school day. Staff and students will also be encouraged to self-monitor symptoms throughout the day. Staff or students who develop symptoms during the school day must notify their teacher or another identified point of contact in the school building immediately.

Students and/or staff who become ill or do not pass screening during the school day will be isolated and pickup arrangements will be made.

Handling Suspected / Confirmed Positive Cases of COVID-19

The school's COVID-19 Program Coordinator will be responsible for responding to COVID-19 concerns and will help coordinate with local health authorities regarding positive COVID-19 cases. All school staff and families should know who this person is and how to contact them.

We will have systems in place to allow staff and families to self-report to the school if they or their student have symptoms of COVID-19, have tested positive for COVID-19, or have had a close exposure to someone with COVID-19 within the last 14 days. This will be in a manner that is consistent with applicable law and privacy policies, including with the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) and the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA).

We will immediately isolate symptomatic individuals in the designated isolation space under visual supervision of a staff member who is at least 6 feet away. Both the symptomatic student and the supervising adults will wear a cloth face covering or a surgical mask.

After each symptomatic individual has gone home, we will implement cleaning and disinfecting procedures following the [COVID-19 Cleaning and Disinfecting Guidance for Schools and Child Care Programs](#).

We will notify MDH of confirmed COVID-19 cases among students and staff (as required by Minnesota Rules, Chapter 4605.7050). An MDH inbox has been established for school COVID case reporting: health.schools.covid19@state.mn.us.

Using SchoolSpeak/PowerSchool, we will also notify staff, and families.

We will coordinate with local health officials, while maintaining confidentiality in accordance with FERPA and all other state and federal laws, and we will follow their instructions.

We will follow the [MDH Decision Tree for People with COVID-19 Symptoms in Youth, Student, and Child Care Programs](#) to determine when a student or staff member may return to school following illness or COVID-19 testing.

Social-Emotional Learning and Mental Health

The COVID-19 pandemic is causing a tremendous amount of stress, fear, and anxiety for many people. It is important that our school community has access to the mental health care resources they need to stay well during this challenging time. Our schools can play an important role in helping students and staff cope, access needed resources, and build resilience.

We will:

- Provide staff, families, and students with age-appropriate information on how to access resources for mental health and wellness.
- Encourage staff, students, and families to talk with people they trust about their feelings and concerns regarding COVID-19.
- Reinforce and enhance curriculum and supports focused on social-emotional learning, relationship building, and successful transitions to new schools, classrooms, and environments, whether in-person or through distance-learning.
- Participate in a series of professional learning modules on social-emotional learning and mental health supports before the start of the school year, as organized by Catholic Education Ministries in the Diocese of St. Cloud.

Athletics and Activities

Athletics and extracurricular activities support the goal of providing a well-rounded educational experience for students within the reopening process.

We will:

- Follow all CDC, MDH, and local public health guidance for physical and social distancing, restricting the size of gatherings for indoor and outdoor spaces, disinfecting equipment, and other health and safety precautions.
- Apply Minnesota State High School League (MSHSL) guidance throughout reopening.
- Have all coaches complete mandatory training before they may conduct any sessions, and all sessions will be held at outdoor fields and facilities.

Section 3 – Curriculum and Instruction

Professional Learning

Now more than ever, the need for professional learning is critical as staff prepare to serve students both virtually and face-to-face. The spring of 2020 was a challenge, but we learned a lot from it, and we will continue to learn. Our staff will need additional tools to meet student needs, which we are prepared to provide them with. 21st century learning is growing by leaps and bounds every day as we discover new ways to deliver excellence in our education programs and curriculum while remaining culturally responsive, trauma-informed, and incorporating anti-racist practices.

Based on student strengths and needs through regular assessments, we will seek to understand staff capacity and professional learning needs by routinely surveying staff.

Assumed focus areas, based on spring 2020 continuous distance-learning, are:

- o Self-care and trauma informed practices.
- o State guidelines on health and safety protocols in light of COVID-19.
- o Safety, COVID-19 hygiene procedures, and behavior expectations.
- o Techniques and strategies for learning in distance-learning and hybrid models.
- o Distance-learning technology, tools, and platforms.
- o Effective formative feedback/assessment and grading expectations.
- o Progressive discipline with positive behavior supports.
- o Responding to the need to address and dismantle racism.

Curriculum

Recognizing the challenges and limitations many students may have experienced with learning during spring 2020, we are revising curriculum guides at all school levels to highlight essential standards for the grade level or course, as well as the prerequisite knowledge and skills learners need in order to be successful with new content.

We will:

- Prepare a yearlong plan for each subject area to ensure that a defined unit topic, adherence to standards/objectives, and formative/summative assessment exists. Planning by unit rather than by week or by day ensures that the learning is building toward important outcomes (teach the concept, not limit to time constraints).
- Take the opportunity to reframe our systems around culturally responsive and anti-racist practices.

- Use practices to build racial and social equity and cultural responsiveness into coursework where it is lacking.
- Implement instructional schedules that will provide significantly more student-teacher interactions for all students than in spring 2020.

Attendance, Grading and Reporting

Attendance will be required for all learning scenarios - in-person, distance learning or hybrid operating models - ensuring shared accountability for learning.

We communicate information about student learning with families through grading. Each school or even each grade may experience the effects of COVID-19 differently. Some schools and or classes may be conducting in-person learning while another is conducting distance-learning. The process and decisions about both standards and grading have profound consequences on students, potentially deepening the opportunity gap and existing inequities. Thus,

- Building principals will collaborate with the superintendent to select the grading system that best fits their school context.
- We will examine how grading policies will affect each student group with the goal of maintaining an equitable system of instruction, assessment, and grading.

Digital Resources

Whether learning takes place primarily in distance-learning or in-person, expanded digital resources will ensure students have consistent access to high quality learning tools. We will continue to train teaching staff in applying blended learning strategies, which involve a mix of teacher-directed and self-directed learning.

Expanded digital reading materials and intervention supports at the elementary levels will enable students at these grades to benefit from supplemental learning tools beyond what their teachers provide on a daily basis.

Assessment

The focus for student assessments within all reopening plans will be to help staff identify individual students' learning needs and plan for upcoming instruction. Assessments geared to this purpose will be prioritized in the assessment program. This will include use of measures for analysis of learning loss that can be attributed to extended school closures.

We will:

- Provide resources and professional development for staff to support effective and appropriate assessment practices in an online learning environment.
- Provide formative assessments and summative assessments for understanding.
- Utilize formative assessment frequently during and after instruction.
- Align summative assessments with unit goals to measure student progress.
- Allow for flexibility including application of skills, especially in distance-learning.
- Prepare to assist students with learning gaps and plan strategic interventions to re-teach and fill these gaps.

Technology and Connectivity

To the greatest extent possible and wherever conducive to learning, every student in grades PreK-12 will have access to a school-provided computing device (Chromebooks, laptops, iPads) for use at home and at school to support in-person and distance-learning.

Students and families will be expected to adhere to the school's policies regarding appropriate use of technology.

We are reviewing video-conference contracts and service level agreements. Priority is to ensure reliable vendor performance and a safe and secure virtual learning platform to support enhanced online instruction in 2020-21.

We also continue to partner with internet service providers to expand free and low-cost home service options in our communities.

Section 4 – Creating and Maintaining Community During Distance-Learning

Faith-Based Learning

Because CCS schools are not only content educators but also evangelical learning communities, we will devise thoughtful and comprehensive strategies to try to compensate for the suspension of in-person instruction.

Vatican documents on education identify the centrality of community and importance of relationships and the presence of a rich prayer and sacramental life.

We acknowledge up front that it simply cannot be as effectively and powerfully accomplished on-line and at home as it can where we are gathered as a community and interacting with each other personally. However, it remains our duty to seek to find ways to translate as much of that benefit as possible to a hybrid and distance-learning environment.

What follows are a few practical tips for conducting our rich mission in a distance-learning environment.

The Presence of a Rich Prayer and Sacramental Life

- To the degree possible, we will keep the school's daily prayer cycles going. We encourage parents to continue the practice. Grace is said before lunch at school, and we encourage you to continue that practice at home as well.
- If a class is being live-streamed, we will start with a prayer led by the teacher or a student.
- We will maintain our Mass schedule by video-streaming it with the school's chaplain or parish pastor. If possible, we will have in-person Mass using strict physical distancing and following personal hygiene protocols. This important gathering will provide a common experience and keep students and teachers connected to each other in prayer.
- Recognizing that students may not engage in prayer at home as frequently as they do in school, we will make extra efforts to insert prayer and Catholic themes into home assignments.
- We will provide mothers and fathers, the spiritual heads of the domestic Church, with suggestions for leading the family in morning and evening prayer, the Rosary, the Church's daily Mass readings, the Liturgy of the Hours, or Lenten Stations of the Cross.

- We will allow time in our classroom schedule for students to personally reflect on provided prompts to more deeply uncover how God speaks to our hearts.
- We will suggest to families to set aside sacred spaces in the home where children can go throughout the day to quiet their hearts and minds and thank God for His gifts, express sorrow for their failings, or ask for His assistance. A simple crucifix, a picture of Jesus or the Holy Family, a Rosary, or prayer cards can initiate a contemplative, prayerful space.
- Following the Church's liturgical cycle at home as we do in school is also important. We can help families enter into that cycle by providing instructions on how to pray together at certain times of the day and teach your children how to do an examination of conscience before they go to bed. Helping families start these family rituals now can have a lasting effect on children's faith development for years to come. In some cases, families may be relying on us to pray with and for their students, and now is an opportunity to fully engage the domestic Church and leverage fuller participation moving forward.

The Centrality of Community and Importance of Relationships

So much of who we are in Catholic education is based on our existence as a faith-based community. All day long we are building community with each other in school, and it has a cumulative effect of creating and transmitting culture. Below are some suggestive ideas that teachers may include in their effort to build community and relationships in their classes within the parameters of our commitment to Safe Environment policies:

- Speaking from the heart and saying and doing things to lighten the load and let students know we miss them and are in good humor.
- Sending a personal video to a student (copying the parent) on his or her birthday or feast day or recording a dramatic reading of a story or poem for all the children to watch.
- Taking a video or image of something that makes them think of something we all learned or did together (photo share).
- Having shared social time among students as a welcome break to their home isolation.
- Writing a letter or card to a student and mailing it to them—they will likely remember it for the rest of their lives.
- Praying for each one of our students daily by name at a particular time and letting them know it. This is a time none of us will soon forget!

- Reaching out to parents to let them know that we are willing to facilitate help for any particular needs by leveraging school resources.

Our older students will enjoy many of the previous contact ideas, but in addition we can sustain community through online “household” social media activities. High schools have found great success with the household system, which merges various grades or cohorts together to form smaller sub-communities. There are many opportunities for interaction and joyful competition between groups. These fun competitions direct students’ energy and focus during down time and help maintain peer connections.

Special Role of Families

Relationship-building is a hallmark of Catholic education. Even amidst these unique challenges, strong communication and relationships must remain a priority.

Families, in consultation with their medical providers, will ultimately make the decision as to whether their children will attend in-person instruction, or whether their children will continue with distance-learning.

We will engage regularly and substantively with families to ensure that they have accurate and up-to-date information to make informed decisions about whether an in-person return is best for their children. This is why we will have a distance-learning program in place for students who are unable to return to in-person school.

Families also play a critical role in supporting the new culture of health and safety that each school must establish. Most importantly, we will encourage families to:

- Mitigate the transmission of COVID-19 in our school communities by checking their children daily for any COVID-19 symptoms.
- Keep children home from school if they are sick or have had close contact with a person diagnosed with COVID-19.
- Support the use of masks in school and on the bus, arranging alternate transportation whenever possible.
- Follow state guidance on health and safety outside of school, such as maintaining family bubbles, health monitoring, and practicing COVID-19 hygiene.
- Follow MDH guidance and recommendations to remain current on all standard vaccinations, including the flu vaccine.

Resources

COVID-19 Resources for schools and

families: [Minnesota Department of Health](#)

[COVID-19 Minnesota Department of Education](#)

[COVID-19](#)

COVID-19 Testing Sites:

[Stearns County](#)

[Benton County](#)

[Sherburne County](#)