



***Notre Dame Academy:
Reopening FAQ for Families
(Updated as of 8/12/21)***

Parents & Guardians:

I know that you have many questions about the start of the school year. If you have been a member of our Notre Dame family you know I pride myself on transparency and making decisions with input from all our stakeholders to do what is best for our school community.

I am extremely proud of the way our entire school community navigated through so much unknown last year and still maintained the high academic and moral standards that make Notre Dame Academy the special place it is. So thank you all for your support, patience, and partnership through what was an extremely difficult time. We were one of the only schools in the area that never had a full shut down, and that will continue to be our goal moving into the new school year. While it may be a bit disheartening to still need plans like this a year later, there are many positives from last year's experience that we will take into this year as we continue to provide your children with the best possible educational experience.

We have updated the Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) document we created last year below to provide you with some important details regarding our plans for September. Specific policies will be sent out before the end of August, As always, any plans are subject to change and must remain dynamic to account for any updates coming from state, local, or archdiocesan authorities. We appreciate your support and confidence as we will continue to work together to do what is best for all our students, faculty, and staff.

In The Peace of Christ

Mark Valvano, Ed.S.

Fundamental Principles for the return to in-person school

MASKS

In accordance with State and Archdiocesan guidelines, all individuals over the age of 2 will be required to wear a mask when in the school building. There will be times built into the schedule such as lunch, recess, and gym when students can remove their masks.

DAILY SYMPTOM SCREENING

We will continue to use Cleared4School on a daily basis to determine if your child is cleared to enter the building. Since last year the system has been simplified for ease of use and must be completed daily by 7:45 for admittance. We are no longer doing temperature checks at various school entrances, so completing the daily screener is more important than ever. If your child is brought to the building without having it completed, they will not be allowed into their classroom until it has been done.

INFECTION PROTOCOLS

Our plan provides for clear guidance on how to address individuals with COVID-19 symptoms and/or positive COVID-19 tests, as well as protocols for individuals vaccinated against COVID-19.

We have written this plan but are awaiting Archdiocesan approval before its publishing. It will be out to families as soon as possible.

REMOTE LEARNING OPTION

While there is no fully remote or hybrid option available to families, the infrastructure and procedures we implemented last year can be utilized if there is a need for any COVID-19 related quarantines.

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) for Parents/ Guardians Regarding the Reopening of Schools

We know that parents have many questions about the start of the school year. In this document, we have outlined many of the frequently asked questions (FAQ) from parents about our reopening plan. These questions are divided up into four sections, each addressing a separate aspect of the reopening process. The categories are:

1. **Health and Safety:** General health and safety questions, such as social distancing, masks, and facility cleaning.
 2. **Academics and Programming:** Questions related to how classes will be taught. This section also includes information on school events (such as masses or assemblies) and extracurricular activities.
 3. **Infection Protocols:** How we will handle instances where students or employees become ill.
- *We have written this plan but are awaiting Archdiocesan approval before its publishing. It will be out to families as soon as possible**

HEALTH AND SAFETY

Q: What will the in-person school day look like?

A: We are returning to our standard operating procedures for arrival and dismissal. Arrival will be from 7:50-8:10 and children can use the main entrance or stop and drop. Dismissal will be at 3 pm from each grade levels assigned doors, which can be found in the family handbook. Before care is available at 7:30 am in the cafeteria and after care runs until 6 pm, also in the cafeteria.

Q: Will students need to wear masks at school?

A: In accordance with State and Archdiocesan guidelines, all individuals over the age of 2 will be required to wear a mask while in the school building regardless of vaccination status.

Q: Do I need to purchase masks for my child?

A: Yes. While we will have an inventory on hand at school, we are asking all parents to purchase masks for their child. Parents may opt to buy disposable or reusable masks. For disposable masks, each mask must be thrown away at the end of every school day and parents should send plenty of extra masks to school with their child. For reusable masks, masks should be cleaned after every use and students should send at least one extra reusable mask at school.

Q: Can face shields be used instead of masks?

A: No. Face shields cannot be used instead of masks but may be worn in addition to. Teachers may use only face shields during times when they are both socially distanced from students and it is necessary for instruction.

Q: Will students be required to socially distance at school?

A: Yes. In their classroom students will be distanced a minimum of 3 feet apart with masks as per CDC guidelines.

Q: Should I take my child's temperature every day before school?

A: Yes. Part of the daily screening protocol will involve a question about your child's daily temperature. A high fever is a key symptom of COVID-19. Parents should take their child's temperature every day before their child is taken to school. If your child has a fever of over 100°F, your child should be kept home from school. You should contact your child's doctor and the school's main office. Similarly, you should ask your child if he/she has any of the other symptoms of COVID-19, such as a sore throat, coughing, or nausea. If your child complains of these symptoms, you should keep him/her home and contact your doctor and the main office.

For more information about how to handle the potential illness of your child, please see the Infection Protocol section.

Q: How will drop off and pick-up be handled?

A: As we return to our regular arrival and dismissal procedures, here are some important reminders:

1. Timeliness is Key: Keep in mind that we were operating at half capacity for the bulk of last school year. Now that we are going back to full in-person instruction, the morning traffic flow will be significantly heavier. Please ensure that if you plan to walk your child to the front door, you are securing a legal parking spot. This does not include the yellow curb directly in front of the school building. That area is for parents who are dropping off children and leaving without exiting their vehicles.
2. Stop and Drop: If you are using our stop and drop please do not pull into the parking lot before 7:45 am. Be sure to stay as far to the right as possible and follow the directions of any staff on duty. Any children who need help exiting the vehicle should be seated on the passenger side of the car. Parents should not exit their vehicles at any time.
3. All students must be wearing a face covering when entering the building.
4. Once admitted to the school building, students must use the hands-free sanitizer station at each entrance.

Q: What does the plan say about safety and cleanliness requirements for school buildings?

A: Our plan includes very specific requirements for the ongoing cleaning and sanitizing of our school building. Generally speaking, buildings will be cleaned very frequently, with a particular focus on high-traffic areas and common surfaces. Windows and/or vents should be opened to maximize air flow. We have prioritized securing additional cleaning supplies and sanitizing products in our budget. Barriers will be installed in main office areas and on tables shared by any students.

Q: How will lunch take place when school reopens?

A: We will begin the school year with students eating lunch in their classrooms with shields up on their desks while we continue to work on a plan for a safe return to cafeteria use.

Q: What about recess?

A: We will be returning to our normal daily recess schedule. Teachers will be encouraged to take students outside for periodic mask breaks as well.

Q: Can I still volunteer at school?

A: To mitigate risk, access to the school building from any visitors will be strictly limited so volunteering in any capacity is yet to be determined.

Q: My child and/or another member of my household is in an at-risk group for COVID-19. Should I send my child to school?

A: Centers for Disease Control (CDC) has defined conditions in which certain people may be more at risk for severe illness through COVID-19. If your child or another member of your household is in an at-risk group, we encourage you to speak to your doctor. Ultimately you should decide whether it is safe for your child to attend school.

Q: Is it okay for my family to travel out of state during the COVID-19 pandemic?

A: Per CDC guidelines, there are currently no domestic travel restrictions or quarantine requirements. However, any international travel requires a 7 day quarantine and a negative PCR test result before readmission to the school building. No remote instruction is available during any travel related quarantine.

Q: What happens if there is a COVID-19 surge in New Jersey and the state imposes more restrictions on schools?

A: If a COVID-19 surge occurs, we will work closely with state officials to determine whether we can continue face-to-face instruction (even on an alternate schedule). If necessary, we will return to at-home remote instruction.

Q: Is there a COVID-19 vaccination requirement in place?

A: At this time, there is no COVID-19 vaccination requirement from the Archdiocese of Newark nor the state of New Jersey for staff or students. If your child is vaccinated against COVID-19 please provide the school nurse with updated records for their file. If your child is currently eligible or will become eligible during the school year for vaccination against COVID-19 and you have any questions about vaccine safety and benefits, please contact your primary care physician or the school nurse.

ACADEMICS AND PROGRAMMING

Q: Will my child's classroom look different?

A: We have adjusted the layout of desks and tables in classrooms to meet social distancing guidelines. In order to maximize floor space, we've asked teachers to remove non-essential furniture, rugs, and other items. We have also asked that desks and tables be arranged so that they face the front of the room.

Q: Will students still change classes?

A: In grades 5-8, we play to return to our regular procedure of students switching classrooms for their primary subjects. All students will travel to use the gym this year as well. As with all plans, they will be adjusted as necessary.

Q: Will students participate in field trips?

A: We are taking a wait and see approach with field trips as most of our trips happen in the Spring. More information will be provided at a later date.

Q: Can we still have meetings of stakeholder groups, such as the School Board, Home School Association?

A: We will begin the year with all virtual meetings for large scale gatherings such as Back to School night.

Q: Will school masses still take place?

A: Yes we will return to our regularly scheduled masses for students and teachers only. Masks will be required at all times.

Q: Will First Communion, Reconciliation, and Confirmation take place this year?

A: Parents are encouraged to contact their parish directly for any information regarding sacraments.

Q: How will extracurricular activities be impacted this year?

A: We are working in accordance with all health guidelines and the Archdiocese to make decisions about all extracurricular activities. Highlights of this guidance include (by activity):

- **Athletics:** At this time we will be offering our usual athletics of Girls volleyball this Fall and boys and girls basketball in the Winter. The soccer clinics for our younger students will return in association with BSM.
- **Choir, Drama/School Play, Christmas Program:** We are tentatively planning to host these events in one form or another. We will make decisions on specific events when necessary based on a range of factors.
- **Other Activities:** For school clubs and other activities we are tentatively planning to move forward hosting them in some form. We will make decisions on a case by case basis as necessary.

INFECTIOUS PROTOCOLS

Q: What are the symptoms of COVID-19?

A: The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) has identified several symptoms of COVID-19, including high fever (above 100.4°F), sore throat, coughing, nausea, headache, muscle aches, loss of taste or smell, runny nose, fatigue, diarrhea and difficulty breathing.

Q: What should I do if my child has symptoms of COVID-19?

A: If your child shows symptoms of COVID-19, you should contact your doctor. Your doctor may ask that your child participate in a COVID-19 test. You should alert the main office and not send your child to school.

If the symptoms occur during the school day, your child will be immediately sent to the nurse's office and you will be contacted to pick your child up from school.

Q: My child had COVID-19-like symptoms, but tested negative for COVID-19. When can he/she return to school?

A: If your child does not have COVID-19, but has another illness, you should keep your child home until the illness' symptoms disappear. You must provide a negative COVID-19 test and/or a doctor's note before your child can return to school.

Q: What should I do if my child tests positive for COVID-19?

A: You should immediately contact your doctor for additional instructions. You should also contact the main office. You should not send your child to school.

Q: When can a student return to school after receiving a positive COVID-19 test?

A: If a student tests positive for COVID-19 or does not seek medical attention, students must isolate and not return to school until they have met CDC's **criteria to discontinue home isolation**. This includes:

1. Three or more days without a high fever;
2. A reduction of other COVID symptoms by at least 75 percent; and
3. At least 14 days have passed since symptoms first appeared.

Q: What should I do if a member of my household (who is not my child) tests positive for COVID-19?

A: You should immediately contact the main office. We will ask that you keep your child home for at least 14 days. If your family member recovers from COVID-19 (through meeting the criteria in the previous question) AND your child shows no COVID-19 symptoms for the 14-day period, your child may be allowed to return.

Q: What happens if my child's teacher tests positive for COVID-19?

A: Should any employee have COVID-19 symptoms or tests positive for COVID-19, we will follow the same protocols used for students (see above). If your child's teacher becomes sick and is unable to work, we will provide a substitute teacher.

Q: What happens if another student in my child's class tests positive for COVID-19?

A: We will make all parents aware that a student has tested positive for COVID-19. All students in the class will be sent home to quarantine for 10 days. Students will be allowed to complete work virtually while the cohort is away from school.

Q: Could the school building be closed down due to COVID-19 this year?

A: We will do our best to ensure a safe and healthy environment in the coming year. However, if numerous cases appear at Notre Dame, resulting in the isolation of multiple classes/cohorts, we may need to close the school building and transition all students to virtual learning for a time. Parents will be updated regularly should that need arise

If you have any other questions about the coming school year, please contact Mr. Valvano by phone or email. Thank you for your continued support and patience as we navigate this together.

In The Peace of Christ
Mark Valvano Ed.S.