



**DIOCESE OF BRIDGEPORT
CATHOLIC SCHOOLS**

FORMING hearts. INFORMING minds. TRANSFORMING lives.

WEFACEIT Faith. Academics. Community. Empowerment. TOGETHER

RE-OPENING PLAN FOR 2020-21

Our school re-entry policies must be adaptable and agile in responding to new information. School administrators will modify approaches when specific policies are not working. For the most up-to-date guidelines always refer to our website:

www.DOBCatholicSchools.com

July 9, 2020

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FACING THE CHALLENGES, TOGETHER

As we look toward the 2020 - 2021 school year, we face obvious challenges as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. This document contains some of the guidelines that we will follow so that, working together, we can meet those challenges. As we wait with great anticipation to see how this pandemic will play itself out over the next few months, we are left with many unanswered questions. What is abundantly clear, however, is that our students need to return to the classroom in the fall.

In May, we created a preschool and a k-12 task force group of school and diocesan teachers and leaders who, informed by parent and teacher focus groups and interviews, have created a plan to ensure that our schools are prepared to welcome students back in the fall. The task force had as its primary focus the safe return of students to a full five-day schedule of in-person instruction, while also planning for the possibility of having to make a fluid transition to a more robust distance learning plan. Additionally, the groups worked on the creation of a hybrid model for students who either can not immediately return to school in the fall or who may have to learn at home temporarily at some point in the year.

As the focus groups met we stayed focused on four guiding principles, we refer to as **F.A.C.E:**

FAITH *Every decision must be rooted in the core belief that our schools must be Christ focused and student centered.*

ACADEMICS *We must, whether focusing on in-person or distance learning, ensure that our academic program is rigorous and that it recognizes the dignity of every child while at the same time challenging students to fully develop their God-given gifts and talents.*

COMMUNITY *Catholic schools must be safe and nurturing environments that are family oriented and encourage students to respect life and serve others.*

EMPOWERMENT *Teachers need to be given the professional development to meet the ever changing academic and social-emotional needs of students. Parents must be engaged partners empowered through consistent communication and support. Students need to be given the age appropriate tools needed so that they can make healthy decisions for themselves, as well as for their fellow students.*

The re-opening plan guidelines on the pages that follow flow from the guiding principles articulated above and our school leaders have already began working to meet the guidelines by modifying the use of space and changing existing practices to ensure a safe, clean, and welcoming environment for our students to return to in the fall. In the coming weeks you should expect to hear directly from your principal with school specific implementation plans in keeping with these guidelines.

While I am sure this document does not answer every question you may have and while it may need to be tweaked as we get closer to the opening days, I do hope that it brings you a bit of comfort and relief in knowing that whatever the challenge, we will face it, together.

May God bless you and may Our Lady shower Her blessings on our Catholic school community.



Dr. Steven F. Cheeseman
Superintendent of schools



ATTENDING SCHOOL IN-PERSON

What will it look like to attend school in-person?

We recognize the need for students to attend school in-person to the degree that health conditions allow. As such, we have developed plans to increase the safety of everyone in our schools by changing how we use our space and implementing new practices that allow for personalized learning during times of pandemic.

Every school has considered the following guidelines and will be expected to implement them based on feasibility, limitations of their setting, and student and teacher needs.



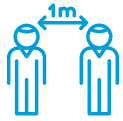
FACE COVERINGS*

- All adults who enter the building must supply and wear a cloth mask or face covering that covers their nose and mouth¹
- Students are asked to supply their own mask or face covering. Schools will maintain a supply of extra masks for students²
- Children in preschool will follow your school's program guidelines regarding when face coverings should be worn
- Children in grades K-8 are required to wear face coverings during times when social distancing (6 feet as described below) cannot occur³
- Students in grades 9-12 will follow their school's guidelines which will be based on the ability to provide for adequate physical distancing in the classroom

**Guidance on face coverings and other social distancing guidelines are based on the information available to us currently. Guidelines may be subject to change should it become necessary.*

¹ Face coverings should be worn by staff and students (particularly older students) as feasible, and are most essential in times when physical distancing is difficult (CDC, 2020).

² In Pre-K, the relative impact of physical distancing among children is likely small based on current evidence and certainly difficult to implement. Therefore, Pre-K should focus on more effective risk mitigation strategies for this population. These include hand hygiene, infection prevention education for staff and families, adult physical distancing from one another, adults wearing face coverings, cohorting, and spending time outdoors (AAP, 2020).



PHYSICAL DISTANCING

In the classroom

- Classes will utilize outdoor spaces when possible
- Unnecessary furniture, rugs, and items that cannot be easily sanitized will be removed
- Desks will be spaced six feet apart wherever feasible⁴
- If a small group meeting space is utilized, partitions will be considered and students will be required to wear masks
- Schools will work to limit the interaction between groups of students
- Classes (particularly at the elementary level) will be organized into cohorts to minimize crossover among children and adults within the school when feasible⁵
- Schools will stagger opening days to allow small cohorts to enter the school prior to full attendance on the first day to give students time to understand the new policies and protocols, and practice the changed routines and rules



Schools will limit number of non-essential adults in the classroom and in the school building

- Schools will limit the number of adults contacting students throughout the day, including volunteers
- Volunteers are allowed at the discretion of each school. Procedures and training will be established and communicated to all volunteers
- Protocols will be established for parent pick-up of students during the school day



COMMON SPACES

Hallways and stairwells

- Students should maintain 6 feet distance between each other when possible
- "One way" flow procedures will be established if possible
- Student movement will be limited throughout the building
- A procedure will be put into place for limiting proximity while using cubicles and/or lockers
- Masks must be worn in hallways and in common spaces

³ Except for individuals whom doing so would be contrary to his or her health or safety because of a medical condition; a child in a child care or pre-school setting; anyone under the age of 2 years, or an older child if the parent, guardian or person responsible for the child is unable to place the mask safely on the child's face (executive order 7BB). r students) as feasible, and are most essential in times when physical distancing is difficult (CDC, 2020).

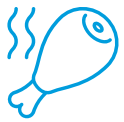
⁴ Evidence suggests that spacing as close as 3 feet may approach the benefits of 6 feet of space, particularly if students are wearing face coverings and are asymptomatic (AAP, June 2020).

⁵ Districts should emphasize grouping students by the same class/group of students and teacher (into a cohort) so each team functions independently as much as possible. Consider this methodology by grade levels (Connecticut State Department of Education, 2020.).



Arrival and dismissal

- Procedures for self-reporting of temperature or symptom checks will be established
- Sanitizing stations by all interior and exterior entrances will be provided
- The number of people entering the building will be reduced
- A procedure to stagger drop off/pickup times or manage the flow of students through different doorways will be established



Lunch

- Lunch will take place in classrooms if social distancing cannot be maintained
- Lunch programs will be modified or eliminated



Playgrounds

- Only one class/cohort will be allowed on the playground at a time
- There will be limited sharing of playground toys, balls, etc to one class/cohort



Bathrooms

- Procedures will be put into place for social distancing and sanitation in bathrooms
- Surfaces will be cleaned frequently



Mass

- To begin the year, students will not attend an in-person mass that is open to the public
- If students attend in-person, private mass, social distancing protocols will be followed



Bussing

- Each school will follow their public district's guidelines
- Driving your student(s) to school is highly suggested



Cleaning and sanitizing procedures

- Access to frequent hand washing and/or sanitizing stations in or near classrooms and common areas will be provided
- Common surfaces will be wiped down frequently
- Procurement and use of hydrostatic cleaning machine(s) to spray used areas with appropriate solution⁶ will occur as often as possible



Shared student supplies

- Shared supplies and materials among students will be limited
- Any shared items will be disinfected regularly

⁶ List N: Disinfectants for Use Against SARS-CoV-2 (COVID-19) (EPA, 2020).



Nursing and sick students

- There will be a supervised isolation room for sick students that is separate from the nurse's office
- Schools will work with local health officials to develop and follow procedures for individuals who are ill or are suspected to have been in contact with someone who is affected by COVID-19



Safety

- Each school is required to have the following items; infrared thermometers, pulse oximeters, face masks, plexiglass for office use as needed (nurse, front office), sanitizing stations, disinfectant wipes and cleaning materials, gloves, hydrostatic cleaning machines and signage to indicate social distancing procedures
- All non-essential uniform items that cannot be washed daily (ties, blazers, etc.) will not be required



INSTRUCTION

- To provide maximum flexibility and ensure effective instruction, teachers will use an online learning management system (such as Google Classroom or SeeSaw) as directed by school leader to plan and share lessons and communicate with students and families
- Teachers will plan and pace instruction to accommodate the movement of individuals or entire classes between in-person and at-home learning





SUDDEN SCHOOL CLOSURE

What if my child's class or school needs to close?

We also need to address the possibility that at some point a class or whole school may need to return to distance learning for a period of time with a plan that ensures high-quality distance learning for all students across our schools. Decisions regarding closure will be made collaboratively with school leadership, the Diocesan Superintendent of Schools, and local health officials.

Based on parent feedback through surveys and focus groups, teacher feedback from cross school professional learning community (PLC) meetings and surveys, and feedback from principal PLC meetings, we have identified key structures and strategies that lead to distance learning success. These structures and strategies, which are included below, reflect our commitment to your child as an individual and includes small-group and individual personalized instruction.

If the class or school needs to close, students will attend school from home in accordance with the school's distance-learning attendance and behavior policies. If you need assistance to secure access to a Chromebook or tablet and adequate internet access during times of possible closure, please let your school leader know now so we can plan accordingly.



ALL CLASS STANDARDS

- Use an online Learning Management System (LMS) such as Google Classroom or Seesaw as directed by school leader to plan and share lessons and communicate with students and families
- Use synchronous distance learning technologies, such as Zoom or Google Meet to engage students learning at home at least four days each week with real-time video instruction between students and teachers
- Communicate in advance, a schedule that includes live sessions and assignments
- Curate or create and share with students curriculum-aligned digital learning resources, lessons, and activities such as online videos to review curricular content teachers were not able to cover during live sessions

Pre-Kindergarten

- Synchronous, live whole group instruction will occur daily (at least four days each week) and will be aligned to the curriculum
- Each student will receive 1-1 or small-group differentiated instruction at least twice weekly
- Live sessions for specials (e.g. art, language, music, P.E., etc.) will occur as directed by building leader

Kindergarten through Grade 3

- Synchronous, live whole group instruction will occur daily (at least four days each week) and will cover religion; phonics; reading; writing; and math and will make connections to science and social studies
- Each student will receive small-group differentiated instruction at least twice weekly to include English/language arts, reading, and math
- Live sessions for specials (e.g. art, language, music, P.E., etc.) will occur as directed by building leader

Grade 4 and 5

- Synchronous, live whole group instruction will occur daily (at least four days each week) and will cover: religion; English/language arts; math; science; and social studies
- Each student will receive small-group differentiated instruction at least twice weekly to include English/language arts, and math
- Live sessions for specials (e.g. art, language, music, P.E., etc.) will occur as directed by building leader

Middle School

- Synchronous, live whole group instruction will occur at least twice each week for each departmentalized content area (e.g. Math, English/language arts, Science, Social Studies, and Religion)
- Each student will receive individual or small-group differentiated instruction at least twice weekly to include English/language arts and math
- Students may receive individual or small group instruction in other content areas as needed, at the discretion of the school leader and/or teacher
- Live sessions for specials (e.g. art, language, music, P.E., etc.) will occur as directed by building leader

High School

Students will follow their daily schedule of classes and attend those classes virtually.



SUPPORT FOR SCHOOL COMMUNITIES

What kind of support is available for our students, families, faculty and staff?

We understand that these challenging times have brought new fears around the mental and physical health of young people as well as significant financial concerns for parents. In the coming weeks you will receive more information regarding each of the following initiatives which we hope will provide you and your family support and additional comfort as you send your child back to school.



PHYSICAL AND SOCIAL EMOTIONAL WELL-BEING

As Catholic educators we, in our effort to form, inform, and transform the young people with whom we work, understand that education, especially faith based education, requires a commitment to the whole student – mind, body and soul. Further, we recognize the commitment you make in sending your child to one of our schools and the trust you place in us. As such, we offer the following supports for our students and families.

Physical Well-Being

We are pleased to announce our new school based telehealth partnership with MyCatholicDoctor, a leader in the telehealth industry offering medical care that is in line with the teachings of the Catholic church.

With Parent consent, MyCatholicDoctor can provide in-school telehealth visits that include the school nurse, the child and the parent. The parents see the child and the whole exam. Then the parent, the school, and the pediatrician have a conversation about how best to meet the needs of the child.

Their team of faithful healthcare professionals provide comprehensive pediatric examinations and treatment, using state-of-the art equipment, including a virtual care stethoscope to listen to heart and lung sounds, and a video otoscope to look at ears and throat.

Their pediatricians can:

- Order lab tests at Quest Diagnostics or your lab of choice
- Order x-rays and other imaging studies at your local imaging center or hospital
- Prescribe medications to your pharmacy of choice
- Coordinate care with the family's primary care physician

Social Emotional Well-Being

Recognizing that this has been a potentially stressful year for students and that some students may experience some level of anxiety as they return to school, we are developing a social-emotional wellness plan that ensures that every student at every school has access to a qualified and licensed social worker. This social worker can provide counseling to students and support to families as needed and will enable us to provide student and parent access to a 24 hour call line as well as a cache of resources to help families through this crisis. We hope to have this program in operation by mid August so that we can help any family who needs support in the transition back to school.

Financial Support

Recognizing the very real financial implications that this pandemic has had on families and in response to the overwhelming number of requests made on the parent survey, we are happy to announce the COVID-19 Emergency Tuition Assistance Fund. Thanks to the generous donors to Foundations in Education, we have already secured one million dollars to help elementary school families. With the benefit of their generosity, we will do the best we can to support a family's desire to remain in Catholic education. More information and an application process on this hardship fund will be provided in the coming weeks from Foundations in Education.

Summer Learning Support

Realizing that some students may feel as though they may not be prepared academically to return in the fall, we have made The Exact Path online learning program available to all students. Teachers use this exciting digital tool during the school year to personalize learning across grades K–12 in reading, language arts, and math and now we have made it available to students over the summer! Exact Path starts by targeting each student's academic strengths and weaknesses with an adaptive assessment, and then it prescribes a tailored playlist of lessons, practice, and short quizzes at their learning level.

In addition, many students will have access to other online learning tools selected by their teachers through their Clever portal. Any students enrolled in grades K-8 during the 2019-2020 school year can access Exact Path and other tools by logging in to the Clever Portal using their school/google email and password here: <https://clever.com/in/diobpt>. More information is available through your individual school's administration. Newly registered students may be registered into this program by contacting our Personalized Learning team directly (PersonalizedLearningTeam@diobpt.org).



FACULTY AND STAFF SUPPORT

Professional Development and Virtual Hours

Through the late summer early fall the Office of the Superintendent staff will increase training and support for teachers on the use and implementation of essential tools used for our personalized and distance learning programs.

Virtual office hours will also be offered for teachers to answer questions and to provide support.

Safety

For the protection of students and for themselves, faculty and staff members will be given training on all safety protocols. Schools will provide supplies for personal protection and sanitization, including soap, hand sanitizer paper towels, tissues, disinfectant wipes, and personal protective equipment as needed.

Social Emotional Well-Being

Recognizing that this has been a potentially stressful year for faculty and staff we are also developing a social-emotional wellness plan that ensures that every faculty and staff member at every school has access to a qualified and licensed counselor. In conjunction with the student and family plan, we hope to have this program in operation by mid August so that we can help any faculty or staff member who needs support in the transition back to school.

In addition, the new school based telehealth partnership with MyCatholicDoctor being offered for students will also be available to support faculty and staff as needed.





TEMPORARY AT-HOME INSTRUCTION

Students who are unable to immediately return to school in the fall or those who need to temporarily return to distance learning while their classmates are attending in person classes will continue to be a part of their school and class communities and will continue to receive some instruction (live and recorded) from their teachers. Students who are receiving at-home instruction will be assigned a diocesan learning support teacher who will coordinate the child's education needs with the school and the parent as well as provide academic support. Temporary at-home instruction is arranged through the school principal and is coordinated at the diocesan level.

PRE-KINDERGARTEN THROUGH GRADE 8

Students will continue to receive direct instruction, assignments, and feedback from their classroom teacher(s).

- Teachers will use a learning management system (LMS, e.g. Google Classroom, SeeSaw) to provide lessons, assignments, give feedback, and communicate with students and families
- Students will turn assignments in through the LMS
- Teachers will use synchronous and/or asynchronous learning technologies to provide those learning at a distance access to instructional materials aligned with the sequence and pacing of students learning in-person. These may include live-streaming classes and/or providing pre-recorded lessons.

Additionally, students will be assigned a Distance Learning Support Teacher who will provide small-group instruction and support while they are learning from home.

- Distance Learning support staff will coordinate with classroom teachers to join classroom teachers' LMS and stay abreast of upcoming assignments
- Distance Learning Staff will make regular contact with students and families, including phone calls
- Students will receive age/grade-level small group or 1-1 instruction from their Distance Learning Support Teacher twice per week

HIGH SCHOOL

High schools will coordinate instruction and support for students who are unable to attend in-person classes locally.



ADDITIONAL SUPPORT

What kind of resources are available to keep my family safe?

If you need additional resources to keep you and your family safe, please check out the resources below:

[WHAT TO DO IF YOU ARE SICK](#)

[HOW TO PROTECT YOURSELF AND OTHERS](#)

[SYMPTOMS OF CORONAVIRUS](#)

[STOP THE SPREAD OF GERMS](#)

[10 THINGS YOU CAN DO TO MANAGE YOUR SYMPTOMS AT HOME](#)

[FEELING SICK? STAY HOME!](#)

[STAY HEALTHY! WASH YOUR HANDS!](#)

National Distress Hotline: 1-800-985-5990, or text TalkWithUs to 66746

For questions, or more information regarding these guidelines, please contact us at schools@diobpt.org

