

Lincoln Catholic Schools: Return to School Plan

July 2020

Jesus said, "Peace I leave with you; My peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give it to you. Do not let your hearts be troubled or afraid." John 14:27

Planning and preparation for the return of all students to school on August 17 is progressing amidst the changing global COVID-19 pandemic. City of Lincoln Catholic schools will continue to diligently follow guidance and recommendations received from the Diocesan Education Office, Nebraska Department of Education, local health departments and/or government officials, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), and the American Academy of Pediatrics. Coordination and collaboration with other city schools, as well as with local public schools and educational service units, will persist throughout the planning and implementation process. As of today, all of those consulted in the development of this plan approve and support opening schools on time and with 100% capacity.

The following guidelines and considerations are based on: 1) the best available public health information and guidance at this time, 2) best practices currently employed, and 3) the practical realities of managing school operations. They are intended to inform planning and implementation and provide consistency of practices and procedures in Lincoln Catholic schools. Operationalizing these guidelines may vary to some degree as local circumstances and logistics unique to each school are considered. As new data, recommendations, and practices emerge, local "Return to School" plans will be revised and updated to reflect changing conditions and needs. In addition, these guidelines and considerations do not reflect the full scope of issues that schools intend to address and manage, which range from day-to-day site-based logistics to the social and emotional well-being of students and staff.

In an effort to return to school, ensure the health and safety of students and staff, and mitigate the risk of spread of the COVID-19 virus and other infectious illnesses, a number of changes in procedures, routines, and protocols outlined below will be necessary to begin the 2020-2021 academic year. Cooperation, support, and continued prayers from school families will be imperative to the successful implementation of these safety measures.

Measures to Mitigate Spread of COVID-19 Virus

- Face Coverings
- Cohort Grouping
- Physical Distancing
- Healthy Hygiene Practices
- Cleaning, Disinfection, and Ventilation
- Symptom Monitoring and Self-Assessment
- Attendance Criteria

Each school will have a dedicated room or space where students or staff who may have COVID-19 or another communicable disease will wait to be evaluated or for pickup. Students will wear a mask in this isolation area. Only essential staff and students assigned to the area may enter; the area will be disinfected several times throughout the day. Strict physical distancing is required, and staff must wear appropriate PPE. Students who are ill will be walked out of the building to their parents/guardians.

Face Coverings

- Face coverings will be worn by all staff and students (particularly older students), unless medically necessary, and are most essential in times when physical distancing cannot easily be maintained or space is insufficient.
- Student face coverings can be taken off during lunch, outdoor recess, and physical education classes.
- When students and staff are using face coverings, quarantine of an entire classroom/school may not be necessary in the event of an initial positive COVID-19 case. If additional cases are identified in that classroom, it may result in quarantine. This decision is determined by the risk of transmission within the classroom itself.
- Use 3-ply cloth face coverings - purchased or homemade, Catholic school appropriate. Clear plastic face shields should be an additional layer of PPE to masks. Only in contexts where not masking is medically necessary can face shields replace face masks. For at risk and vulnerable people, the combination of face masks and face shield can reduce risk of exposure.
- Food service workers and staff in routine contact with the public (e.g., front office) use gloves and facial coverings.
- Refrain from touching face covering and wash hands frequently.

Physical Distancing Inside and Outside the Classroom

Physical distancing is the act of keeping people separated with the goal of limiting spread of contagion between individuals. It is fundamental to lowering the risk of spread of COVID-19, as the primary mode of transmission is through respiratory droplets by persons in close proximity.

Arrival and Departure

- Maximize space between students.
- Minimize contact between students, staff, families, and the community at beginning and end of school day.
- Consider staggered arrival and drop off-times and locations.
- Designate routes for entry and exit, using as many entrances as feasible. Limit direct contact with others as much as possible.
- Individual school plans will vary based on site layout and logistics.

Classroom Space

- Students remain in the same space, in cohort groups as small and consistent as possible. Keep same students and teacher or staff with each group, to the greatest extent possible.
- Minimize movement of students and teachers or staff as much as possible. Keep teachers with one group of students for the entirety of the school day, to the greatest extent possible.
- Maximize space between seating and desks. Distance teacher and other staff desks at least six feet away from student desks. Establish separation of students through other means if possible: three to six feet between desks, partitions between desks, markings on classroom floors to promote distancing.
- Arrange desks in a way that minimizes face-to-face contact—desks in rows, facing the front of the classroom.
- Rearrange furniture and play spaces to maintain separation.
- Develop instructions for maximizing spacing and minimizing movement in both indoor and outdoor spaces.

Non-classroom Space

- Limit nonessential visitors, volunteers, and activities involving other groups at the same time when risk dial is in the YELLOW zone. No nonessential visitors when risk dial is in ORANGE zone.
- Limit communal activities when and where possible. Alternatively, stagger use, properly space occupants, and disinfect in between uses.
- Use non-classroom space for instruction, including regular use of outdoor space, when possible.
- Minimize congregate movement through hallways, establish additional ways to enter and exit the building, stagger passing times when necessary or when students cannot stay in one room.
- Serve meals in classrooms or outdoors instead of cafeterias when possible. Serve individually plated or bagged meals. Avoid sharing of foods and utensils and buffet or family-style meals.
- Hold recess activities in separated areas designated by cohort class, and outside as much as possible.

Healthy Hygiene Practices

- Model and practice proper and frequent hand washing.
- Wash hands before and after eating, after coughing or sneezing, after being outside, and before and after using the restroom.
- Wash hands for twenty seconds with soap, rubbing thoroughly after application, use paper towels to dry hands thoroughly.
- Avoid contact with eyes, nose, and mouth, cover coughs and sneezes.
- Use tissue to wipe nose, cough/sneeze inside tissue or elbow.
- Use hand sanitizer when hand washing is not available. Sanitizer must be rubbed into hands until completely dry.
- Develop routines to wash hands frequently and at staggered intervals.

Limit Sharing

- Keep student belongings separated. Ensure belongings (face masks, personal water bottles) are taken home each day to be cleaned.
- Ensure adequate supplies to minimize sharing of high-touch materials (art supplies, equipment, etc.) to the extent possible or limit use of supplies and equipment to one group of students at a time—cleaning and disinfecting between uses.
- Avoid sharing electronic devices, clothing, toys, books, and other games or learning aids as much as possible.
- Limit use of shared playground equipment. Encourage physical activities that require less contact with surfaces.

Cleaning, Disinfection, and Ventilation

- Suspend or modify use of resources that necessitate sharing or touching items. Suspend use of drinking fountains and encourage use of personal, reusable water bottles.
- Clean and disinfect frequently-touched surfaces within school every 2-4 hours, and on school buses twice daily - after first route and at conclusion of last route.
- Thoroughly clean buses and disinfect daily and after transporting any individual who is exhibiting symptoms of COVID-19.
- Provide disinfectant wipes and disposable gloves to support disinfection of frequently touched surfaces during the day.
- Disinfect frequently touched surfaces including, but not limited to:
 - Door handles - keep doors open when not a security risk.
 - Light switches

- Sink handles
- Restroom surfaces
- Tables
- Student desks
- Chairs
- Establish cleaning and disinfecting schedule to avoid both under and over-use of cleaning products.
- Ensure safe and correct application of disinfectant.
- Ensure proper ventilation during cleaning and disinfecting. Introduce fresh outdoor air as much as possible, for example, by opening windows. When cleaning, air out space before children arrive; plan thorough cleaning when children are not present.
- Replace and check air filters and filtration systems to ensure optimal air quality.

Symptoms Monitoring & Self-Assessment

- Encourage at-home screening for symptoms before arrival at school. The Lincoln diocese is developing a self-screening instrument, designed to be used at home, that will be shared with families and staff in the near future.
- Encourage staff and students who are sick or who have recently had close contact with a person with COVID-19 to stay home.
- Conduct visual wellness checks of students.
- Monitor staff and students throughout the day for signs of illness.
- If a student is exhibiting symptoms of COVID-19, they will move to an identified area in the building where symptomatic students can isolate. Staff taking temperatures with a no-touch thermometer will use appropriate PPE (surgical mask and gloves, if N-95 not feasible). Staff will communicate with parent/caregiver and refer to student's health history form.
- Students and staff with a fever of 100.4 degrees or higher, cough, or other COVID-19 symptoms will be sent home.
- Document/track incidents of possible exposure and notify local health officials, staff, and families immediately of any positive case of COVID-19 while maintaining confidentiality, as required under FERPA and state law related to privacy of educational records.

Attendance Exclusion and Return Criteria

Given the nature of the pandemic, schools will make additional medical inquiries of students than they otherwise would. If a parent/guardian notifies the school that a student is ill, the school may ask the parent whether the student is exhibiting any symptoms of COVID-19 and provide instruction based on the current state and local health directives for the student's school attendance; the student's attendance will be coded accordingly.

Return to School After Exclusion

Once a student is excluded from the school environment, he/she may return if he/she satisfies the following recommendations from the CDC. Currently, these guidelines are:

UNTESTED: Persons who have not received a test proving or disproving the presence of COVID-19 but experience symptoms may return if the following three conditions are met:

1. Fever free for at least 72 hours (that is three full days of no fever without the use medicine that reduces fevers); and
2. Other symptoms have improved (for example, when cough or shortness of breath have improved); and

3. Ten (10) calendar days have passed since symptoms first appeared.

OR

Students may also return if they are approved to do so in writing by the student's health care provider.

TESTED: Persons who experienced symptoms and have been tested for COVID-19 and are found to be positive may return to school if the following three conditions are met:

1. Fever free for at least 72 hours (that is three full days of no fever without the use medicine that reduces fevers); and
2. Other symptoms have improved (for example, when cough or shortness of breath have improved); and
3. Ten (10) calendar days have passed since symptoms first appeared

Persons who experienced symptoms and have been tested for COVID-19 and are found to be negative may return to school if the following two conditions are met:

1. Fever free (without the use medicine that reduces fevers); and
2. Other symptoms have improved (for example, when cough or shortness of breath have improved)

TESTED WITH NO SYMPTOMS: Persons who have not had symptoms but test positive for COVID- 19 may return to school when the following three conditions are met:

1. Fever free for at least 72 hours (that is three full days of no fever without the use medicine that reduces fevers); and
2. Any symptoms that develop have improved (for example, cough or shortness of breath have improved); and
3. Ten (10) calendar days have passed since positive test was done.

Remote learning plan may be implemented while excluded for an extended period of time.

Siblings or Other Students in the Household

If a student is excluded from school due to COVID-19 symptoms or has had a positive COVID-19 test, his or her siblings or other students living in the same household will also be excluded from school and required to self-quarantine.

Self-Quarantine

Anyone in close, prolonged contact with a COVID+ individual will be required to quarantine for 14 days by the health department.

School Response to Exclusion from School or Self-Quarantine

Refer to procedures above. As soon as the school becomes aware that a student or staff has COVID-19, the student will be isolated, as previously stated, staff will be sent home, and custodial staff will be informed so that all desks, cubbies, lockers, workspaces, etc. are thoroughly disinfected. If the school is not open when notification occurs, the custodial staff will wait 24 hours or as long as possible prior to disinfecting and instead will block off the area so that

others do not have contact. However, if a 24-hour wait time is not possible or school is in session, the cleaning will occur immediately.

Reference-<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.htm>

Healthy Operations

- Monitor staff absenteeism and have roster of substitute/trained back-up staff.
- Monitor types of illnesses and symptoms among students and staff to help promptly isolate.
- Provide health office staff with appropriate medical PPE to use in health office. PPE should include N95 masks, surgical masks, gloves, disposable gowns, and face shields or other eye protection.
- Perform nebulizer treatments in a space that limits exposure to others and with minimal staff present.
- Maintain and not defer existing school immunization requirements due to the current pandemic.
- Designate staff to be responsible for responding to COVID-19 concerns. Staff will coordinate documentation and tracking of possible exposure, notify local health officials, staff and families in a prompt and responsible manner.
- Maintain communication systems that allow staff and families to self- report symptoms and receive prompt notifications of exposures and closures.
- Support staff and students who are at higher risk for severe illness or who cannot safely distance from household contacts at higher risk by providing reasonable and appropriate options and accommodations, as the school is able.

Considerations for Partial or Total Closures

- Check state and local directed health measures and health department notices daily about transmission in the area or closures and adjust operations accordingly.
- In consultation with the local public health department, diocesan school officials may decide whether school closure is warranted, including the length of time necessary, based on the risk level within the specific community as determined by local public health officials.
- Implement communication plans for school closure to include students, parents, teachers, staff, and school community.

Training & Education

- Provide educational materials to families in the following safety actions:
 - Enhanced disinfecting practices
 - Physical distancing guidelines
 - Use of face coverings
 - Screening practices
 - COVID-19 specific symptom identification
 - Enhanced hand washing and hand hygiene.
- Conduct training and education virtually or, if in-person, ensure distancing is maintained.
- Provide information to all staff and families on proper use, removal, and washing of cloth face coverings.

References:

Lincoln-Lancaster County Health Department
<https://lincoln.ne.gov/city/health/>

Nebraska Department of Education
<https://www.launchne.com>

Center for Disease Control

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/schools-childcare/schools.html>

American Academy of Pediatrics

<https://services.aap.org/en/pages/2019-novel-coronavirus-covid-19-infections/clinical-guidance/covid-19-planning-considerations-return-to-in-person-education-in-schools/>

Prayer for a New School Year

Lord Jesus, we ask for Your help as we prepare for this new school year. Allow us to experience Your presence in the many blessings You place before us. Open our eyes to the new challenges and exciting opportunities that this new school year will bring. Open our heart and mind to new friends and new teachers. Give us a generous spirit to be enthusiastic with our studies and courage to accept new challenges. Help us to be attentive to what is asked of us and flexible as changes in procedures and routines this year will be necessary. Help us to always remember you are with us, and we are beloved sons and daughters of Our Father, who never leaves us alone. Jesus, along with the Holy Spirit, inspire me to do my best and be my best this year. Amen.