

JUNE 16, 2020

Updated July 21, 2020



**CATHOLIC
SCHOOLS**
DIOCESE OF NASHVILLE

**RETURN TO SCHOOL PROTOCOLS
& GUIDANCE**

CATHOLIC SCHOOLS, DIOCESE OF NASHVILLE

*ADAPTED FROM THE NASHVILLE PLAN: FRAMEWORK FOR A SAFE, EFFICIENT,
AND EQUITABLE RETURN TO SCHOOL*

LETTER FROM SUPERINTENDENT

June 16, 2020

Principals and Administrators,

On the pages that follow, please find the protocols and guidance prepared for students to return to our campuses in August. These protocols closely mirror the guidance provided in the [*Nashville Plan: Framework for a Safe, Efficient, and Equitable Return to School.*](#)

I had the pleasure of serving on the team that developed the Nashville plan and deem them appropriate for our Catholic schools with a few additions and modifications, which are included in this document. Since these protocols are written to align with “Phase 3” of Mayor Cooper’s [*Roadmap for Reopening Nashville*](#), I remain aware that other counties’ school systems may have different protocols in place. I therefore present these to our schools located outside of Nashville in the spirit of *guidance* and to those located inside Davidson County as *protocols* to be included in your school’s local plan to return to campus.

All schools are asked to use these protocols to develop procedures for students to safely return to school in person, as we expect and hope to do in August. Each of the eight sections presented here should inform each Catholic school’s procedures throughout the period that COVID-19 transmission remains a threat to our school communities. Catholic schools outside of Nashville will develop procedures aligned to their Local Education Agency (LEA) and in accordance with protocols presented in [*Reopening Tennessee Responsibly*](#), as promulgated by Governor Lee. All Catholic schools will present their plans to the Catholic Schools Office no later than July 30, 2020. As always, the CSO team stands by ready to assist you in any way. Please do not hesitate to call upon us.

Thank you for all you do for our students, families, faculty, and staff. Your leadership is key to the successful operation of the school, particularly in unprecedented times such as these. The community will take comfort in the presence of clear order and sound judgment which you will provide in your own “Return to School Plan.” Thank you!

Yours in Christ,



Rebecca Hammel

Section A: Class Size, Spacing Requirements, and Movement Operations

Class Size/Spacing

- Arrange all desks facing the same direction toward the front of the classroom with as much space between them as possible.
- Students should either (1) wear face masks or face shields, (2) use a physical barrier to the side of desks, or (3) distance students six feet apart.
- Teachers should try to maintain six feet of spacing between themselves and students as much as possible but should wear masks or face shields if closer than six feet.
- Classroom windows should be open when possible and conditions allow.
- Assemblies of less than 50 students at a time are discouraged but allowed as long as face masks or face shields and remain in use and students are spaced appropriately.
- Large-scale assemblies of more than 50 students should be discontinued.

Movement Operations

- Flow of foot traffic should be directed in only one direction if possible.
- If one-way flow is not possible, hallways can be divided with either side following the same direction.
- Efforts should be made to try and keep six feet of distance between persons in the hallways.
- Face masks or face shields should be worn by all persons at all times in hallways and common areas.
- Staggered movements at incremental intervals should be used if feasible to minimize the number of persons in the hallways as able.
- Floor tape or other markers should be used at six-foot intervals where line formation is anticipated.

Section B: Protocols for Screening Students, Faculty, and Staff

At this time, the CDC recommends temperature screening of students upon entry only if feasible for the situation. Most larger schools will not be able to provide this screening for every student, though smaller schools may be able to do so. If any screening does occur, it should comply with privacy and HIPAA requirements.

- Students are allowed to enter the building at only 1-2 sites and must egress from other exits to keep traffic moving in a single direction.
 - Parents are not allowed in the school building except under extenuating circumstances; adults entering the building will have to respond to the health screening questions and have a temperature check. Parents must wear masks, practice social distancing, and wash or sanitize hands prior to entering.
 - If there are extenuating circumstances that necessitate a parent entering the school, only one parent per child should be allowed to enter to minimize the number of entering persons.
 - Strict records, including date, time and health screen sheets, should be kept of non-school employees entering and exiting the building.
- Parents should check student's temperature at home every morning using oral, tympanic, or temporal scanners; students with a temperature of 100.4 or above should stay home and consider coronavirus testing if no other explanation is available.
- Parents should ask their children or monitor for any cough, congestion, shortness of breath, or gastrointestinal symptoms every morning. Any positives should prompt the parent to keep the student home from school.
- If resources allow, schools can perform temperature checks on students **throughout the** day; febrile students should be sent to the nurse's office for transport home.
- Children who fall ill at school should be placed in an area of quarantine in the nurse's office or designated area with a surgical mask in place. Nurses or other school staff caring for these students should wear N95 masks while doing so.
- Students sent home from school should be kept home until they have completely recovered as defined by [CDC guidelines](#) and may be asked to provide a physician's note to return to school.
- When students return to school, they are to check in with the school administration to ensure proper communication with health officials.
- All faculty and staff will respond to health questions presented in Governor Lee's "Tennessee Pledge: Reopening Tennessee Responsibly" and have their temperature taken by a designated staff member(s) using oral, tympanic, or temporal scanners. Responses to the questions are to be documented and maintained confidentially, the **temperature itself may not be recorded**, but it should be documented that the employee was screened and was symptom-free.
 - Have you been in close contact with a confirmed case of COVID-19 in the past 14 days? (Note: This does not apply to medical personnel, first responders, or other individuals who encounter COVID-19 as part of their professional or caregiving duties while wearing appropriate PPE.)

- Are you experiencing a cough, shortness of breath or sore throat?
- Have you had a fever in the last 48 hours?
- Have you had new loss of taste or smell?
- Have you had vomiting or diarrhea in the last 24 hours?

Any employee who exhibits COVID-19 symptoms (i.e., answers yes to any of the screening questions or who is running a fever) will be directed to leave the premises immediately and seek medical care and/or COVID-19 testing, per Tennessee Department of Health and CDC guidelines. Employers must maintain the confidentiality of employee health information.

Section C: Testing Protocols for Students and Responding to Positive Cases

The CDC has specifically stated that schools are not expected to be testing students or staff for SARS-CoV-2. At this time, there are new antigen tests seeking approval by the Food and Drug Administration that would make point-of-care testing a possibility, but this is not expected to extend to schools or be performed by school nurses.

Responding to Staff and Students Presenting Symptoms

- Students who develop fever or fall ill at school should be kept in an area of quarantine (nurse's office) with a surgical mask in place until they can be transported off campus. They should be transported by their parents, or ambulance if clinically unstable, for offsite testing.
- In the event that a student or adult tests positive, the school will contact the local county public health department of the student's residence. The health department will contact close contacts (those who spent more than 10 minutes in close proximity to the student) so that they can be quarantined at home. Classmates should be closely monitored for any symptoms. At this time, empiric testing of all students in the class is not recommended; only those who develop symptoms require testing.
- Parents should be notified of the presence of any positive cases in the classroom and/or school to encourage closer observation for any symptoms at home. Parents should check student's temperature at home every morning using oral, tympanic, or temporal scanners; students with a temperature of 100.4 or above should stay home and consider coronavirus testing if no other explanation is available.
- Parents should ask their children or monitor for any cough, congestion, shortness of breath, or gastrointestinal symptoms every morning. Any positives should prompt the parent to keep the student home from school and seek out testing.
- Students sent home from school should be kept home until they have tested negative or have completely recovered according to [CDC guidelines](#).

Responding to Positive Tests Among Staff and Students

- In the event of a positive test among staff or a student, the staff member or student must quarantine as directed by [the CDC guidelines](#) and health care provider recommendations. This will range between 10 to 14 days as determined by the presence of symptoms or lack of symptoms. Note, this could be longer for individuals with weakened immune systems.
- In the event of a positive test among staff or a student, the classroom or areas exposed should be immediately closed until cleaning and disinfection can be performed.
 - If the person was in the school building without a face mask, or large areas of the school were exposed to the person, short-term dismissals (2-5 days) may be required to clean and disinfect the larger areas. This decision should be made in concert with the local public health department.

- If possible, smaller areas should be closed for 24 hours before cleaning to minimize the risk of any airborne particles.
 - Cleaning staff should wear an N95 respirator when cleaning these areas along with gloves and face shield

Section D: Protocols for Dining, Mass, Gathering, and Extracurricular Activities

Dining

- Students, teachers, and cafeteria staff wash hands before and after every meal.
- If possible, classrooms should be used for eating in place.
- Students may bring food from home.
- School-supplied meals should be delivered to classrooms with disposable utensils.
- If cafeterias need to be used, mealtimes must be staggered to create seating arrangements with six feet of distance between students.
 - Proper barriers between serving staff, food, and the consumer are to be in place.
 - Disposable utensils should be employed and presented per child (instead of children reaching and selecting them themselves).
 - Serving and cafeteria staff should use barrier protection, including gloves, face shields, and surgical masks; N95 respirators are not required.
 - Open selection of food (salad bars, self-serve stations) should be closed or manned by an adult to avoid multiple surface touches.

Mass, Gathering and Extracurricular Activities

- School personnel should follow the public Mass guidelines established for the parish; maintain appropriate distancing as allowed in the school building, wear mask/shields, and continue hand washing or sanitizing before and after.
- Academic Assemblies of less than 50 students at a time are discouraged but allowed if facemasks or face shields remain in use.
 - Parents and grandparents are not allowed to attend these assemblies; schools will offer telecasting of events if able.
- Students and teachers wash hands before and after every event.
- Large-scale assemblies of more than 50 students should be discontinued.
- Off-site field trips are discontinued.
- Inter-school activities may continue as long as bus transportation is provided, and students wear masks throughout the transport period.
 - Schools may elect to discontinue these activities if Ro and community transmission rise consistently.
- After-school programs may continue with the use of face masks
 - Schools may elect to discontinue these activities if Ro and community transmission rise consistently.

Section E: Protocols for Athletic Activities

- Only sports that can be modified to allow physical distancing for conditioning are allowed to continue, preferably outside. Off-site, inter-school competitions may be held provided that face masks are worn during transportation.
 - Spectators fewer than 50 are allowed provided that face masks are used by observers at all times.
 - Large-scale spectator events with more than 50 people are not allowed.
 - Schools may elect to discontinue these activities if Ro and community transmission rise consistently.
- Schools should consult with public health officials and school sports governing bodies for the current public health guidance on sports with close contact.
- Students, teachers, and staff wash hands before and after every practice, event, or other gathering.
- Weight room and physical conditioning activities should only be used with proper social distancing in alignment with the Reopening Nashville Roadmap. These facilities are also to be cleaned according to the guidelines in Protocol F: Cleaning.
- Locker rooms and group changing areas should be closed unless social distancing may be observed.
- Any uniforms or other clothing that need to be washed/laundered at school can be washed in warm water with regular detergent.

Section F: Personal Protective Equipment and Cleaning Protocols

Use of physical distancing measures is designed to create layers of redundancy, recognizing that students are unlikely to be able to maintain full compliance at all times. They are designed to minimize the risk of transmission as much as possible while still allowing for feasibility, flexibility, and ease of use.

Use of Personal Protective Equipment and Hand Washing

- All staff and students should wear face masks or face shields when they are in common areas, including moving between classrooms; masks may be homemade or disposable level one (basic) grade surgical masks; N95 respirators are not necessary, except for nurses and custodial staff cleaning and disinfecting an area exposed to a positive case.
- Students should wash their hands or use hand sanitizer after changing any classroom; teachers in the classroom should wash their hands or use sanitizer every time a new group of students enters their room.
- Students and teachers should have scheduled hand washing with soap and water every 2-3 hours.
- Privacy or barrier screens may be placed at the side of desks in classrooms.
- Gloves are not required except for janitorial staff or teachers cleaning their classrooms.
- Gowns, hair coverings, and shoe covers are not required.

Cleaning Protocols

Coronaviruses on hard surfaces can survive for hours to days. Exposure to sunlight and higher temperatures is expected to diminish their survival, but the exact amount of time required remains unclear. At this point, more aggressive cleaning practices are recommended in order to err on the side of caution.

- School campuses should undergo cleaning on an increased tempo.
- Frequently touched surfaces, including lights, doors, benches, bathrooms, etc., should undergo cleaning with either an [EPA-approved disinfectant](#) or dilute bleach solution frequently, no less than daily.
- Libraries, computer labs, arts, and other hands-on classrooms should undergo cleaning with either an [EPA-approved disinfectant](#) or dilute bleach solution frequently, no less than daily.
- Efforts should be made to minimize sharing of materials between students as able.
- Student desks should be wiped down with either an [EPA-approved disinfectant](#) or dilute bleach solution frequently, no less than daily.
- Playground equipment and athletic equipment should be cleaned with either an [EPA-approved disinfectant](#) or dilute bleach solution frequently, no less than daily.
- Staff should wear gloves, surgical mask, and face shield when performing all cleaning activities.

Section G: Busing and Student

Transportation

The risks associated with student transportation in buses have not been studied to date. As a result, these recommendations are derived from school operating procedures and the best “reasonable standard” given feasibility constraints.

- Face masks or face shields should be worn by all staff and students at all times.
- Windows should be open when possible and conditions allow.
- Unloading of buses at school should be staggered to minimize mixing of students as they enter school and to allow six feet of distance while entering through designated entry points.
- Seats and handrails should be wiped down with either an [EPA-approved disinfectant](#) or dilute bleach solution before and after every ride.

Section H: Protocols for Serving Medically Vulnerable Students and Teachers

Understandably, a key concern is whether certain populations of students, teachers, and other employees may be at increased risk of infection and severe disease by attending school in person. These high-risk groups include but are not limited to:

- [People 65 years and older](#)
- People of all ages with [underlying medical conditions](#), particularly if not well controlled, including:
 - People with chronic lung disease or moderate to severe asthma
 - People who have serious heart conditions
 - People who are immunocompromised
 - Many conditions can cause a person to be immunocompromised, including cancer treatment, smoking, bone marrow or organ transplantation, immune deficiencies, poorly controlled HIV or AIDS, and prolonged use of corticosteroids and other immune weakening medications
- People with severe obesity (body mass index [BMI] of 40 or higher)
- People with diabetes
- People with chronic kidney disease undergoing dialysis
- People with liver disease

Unfortunately, there is no validated data on how much risk medically vulnerable individuals incur by attending school in person, and individuals will need to make the decision to attend in person in close consultation with their health care provider.

- If feasible, the school may consider remote learning as an option for high-risk staff or students.
 - If able, high-risk teachers should be made aware of additional protective equipment options as well as alternative assignments.
 - Parents may consider keeping children with underlying health conditions at home and pursue education through remote learning if reasonable accommodations can be made with the school.
- Ultimately, individual decisions to attend school in person under COVID 19 conditions will be left to parents and staff. If reasonable accommodations can be made, the school will work with each individual on a case-by-case basis and with medical authorizations or recommendation.