

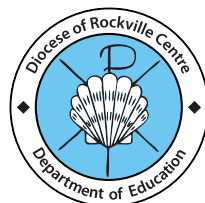
# DIOCESE OF ROCKVILLE CENTRE

## CATHOLIC ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS



# RE-OPENING PLAN FOR 2020-21

For the most up-to-date guidelines always refer to our website: [www.DRVCSchools.org](http://www.DRVCSchools.org)



The  
Morning Star  
Initiative

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## Dear Parents and Guardians:

As we look toward the 2020 - 2021 school year, our students, families, teachers, and administrators face obvious and unexpected challenges from the COVID-19 pandemic. We know the pandemic has resulted in uncertainty in many areas of our lives and has upended our normal routines. We recognize the unease faced by parents in regard to the upcoming school year. Some of this unease is rooted in not knowing what the future holds and subsequently not being able to plan for that reality.

As leaders of the system of 35 Catholic elementary schools in the Diocese of Rockville Centre, we want to share with you a preliminary overview of overarching guidelines we will follow for the reopening of our schools this September. We have been preparing all summer so we are able to meet all challenges and work together during this time. Certainly, there are many unanswered questions, and things can (and may) change quickly. However, what is abundantly clear is that we will do everything possible to make it safe for students and teachers to return to each of our schools this fall.

Since May, the Department of Education, supported by the Morning Star Initiative task force, partnered with each of our school principals to establish plans for safely returning to school.

These plans have been shaped by parent and teacher input, interviews with key stakeholders, and most importantly, a team of threat mitigation and safety experts specifically focused on the demands and challenges of COVID-19. Collectively, our primary focus has been planning for the safe return of students to a full schedule of in-person instruction, while also preparing for the possibility of having to make a seamless transition to a more robust distance learning plan if we are called to do so. We are supporting schools on an individual basis to create a hybrid model for students who either cannot immediately return to school in the fall or who may have to learn at home temporarily at some point in the year.

Our partnership with a safety and threat mitigation consulting company has allowed each school in the Diocese to develop and implement secure COVID-19 operating procedures that meet or exceed both CDC and NY State guidelines. These experts have analyzed the most effective and critical pandemic mitigation procedures and technologies across sectors. Under their guidance, we are confident that every one of our Catholic schools can open in September with all of the necessary practices, policies, and protocols necessary for the safe return of our students, teachers, and staff.

As we prepare for the new realities of the 2020-2021 school year, the Department of Education and our 35 dynamic and dedicated principals have been guided by the four pillars proposed by the Morning Star Initiative for the revitalization of Catholic Education on Long Island:

**SAFE AND SUPPORTIVE COMMUNITY.** Each school is a welcoming place where young people are safe and supported, cherished and challenged—during COVID-19, this is obviously even more critical. Beyond investing in the necessary equipment, technology, and safety measures to make sure children are in the safest environment possible, we are committed to nurturing the social and emotional needs of our students who have missed their teachers and classmates for many months.

**ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE.** Whether our students are physically in school or learning remotely, the teachers of all our Catholic schools will ensure that our academic program is rigorous and provides opportunities for all students to interact with their teachers and classmates. We have prepared teachers all summer to collaborate on a flexible and challenging curriculum that will engage students whether they are in the classroom or learning from home.


**ROBUSTLY CATHOLIC.** Even when we were physically distanced, our Catholic schools kept our faith communities close through prayer, worship, and religious instruction. Each of our schools is completely committed to cultivating an environment where all students can flourish in a robustly Catholic culture through study, prayer, and service to their sisters and brothers.

**HERE TO STAY.** We are revitalizing our Catholic schools to meet the changing needs of our community. During COVID-19, “here to stay” means providing teachers with more professional development and resources to meet the ever changing academic and social-emotional needs of students, providing students with technology and new materials this fall, and supporting school leaders with their unique school needs.

The re-opening guidelines on the pages that follow flow from the principles articulated above. Our school leaders have already begun working towards these guidelines. They are modifying the use of space and changing existing practices to ensure a safe, clean, and welcoming environment for students to return to every one of our schools in the fall. In the coming weeks you should expect to hear directly from your principal with school-specific implementation plans in relation to these guidelines.

While we recognize this guide does not answer every question you may have, and while our guidance may need to shift slightly as we get closer to the first day of school, we hope our preparation brings you a bit of comfort and relief. Whatever the challenge, we will embrace it head on, and move forward together for the sake of the children you have entrusted to us for their education and formation in faith.

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

  
Dr. Kathleen Walsh  
Superintendent of Schools,  
Diocese of Rockville Centre

  
Brother Thomas Cleary, S.M.  
Chief Revitalization Officer,  
Morning Star Initiative



## 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 the COVID-19 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 mouth<sup>1</sup>
- Students are asked to supply their own mask or face covering. Schools will maintain a supply of extra masks for students<sup>2</sup>
- 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 occur<sup>3</sup>

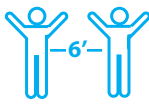
*\*Guidance on face coverings and other social distancing guidelines are based on the information available to us currently. Guidelines may be subject to change should it become necessary.*

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*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).*

*3 Except for individuals for 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. (CDC, 2020).*



### PHYSICAL DISTANCING

#### In the classroom

- Classes will consider safe use of outdoor spaces when possible
- Unnecessary furniture, rugs, and items that cannot be easily sanitized will be removed
- Desks will be spaced six feet apart where feasible<sup>4</sup>
- 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 feasible<sup>5</sup>
- Schools are considering staggering 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
- Teachers will maintain six feet of distance unless the safety or effectiveness of the activity requires a shorter distance, at which point masks will be worn.
- Desks will be spaced six feet apart wherever feasible. When not feasible, students will be spaced three feet apart, based on precedent from other states and the World Health Organization, and required to wear a mask.



#### 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
- Parents will not be permitted in the school except for emergencies and then must undergo screening procedures.

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<sup>4</sup> 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).

<sup>5</sup> 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



## 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



### Arrival and dismissal

- All schools will conduct temperature checks prior to students, faculty and visitors entering the building
- Sanitizing stations 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

- Food service programs will not reopen immediately and will be reassessed after initial building reopening



### 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
- Equipment will undergo disinfection between different cohorts playing on the equipment



### Bathrooms

- Bathrooms will have a strict and enforced maximum occupancy
- Bathroom disinfection will occur a minimum of four times a day and cleaned as frequently as possible



### 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 encouraged



### 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
- Use of cleaning machine(s) to spray used areas with appropriate solution<sup>6</sup> 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



### Nursing and sick students

- There will be a supervised isolation area 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, face masks, sanitizing stations, disinfectant wipes and cleaning materials, gloves, 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) as directed by the school principal 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

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





## 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 in each of our schools. Decisions regarding closure will be made collaboratively with school and MSI leadership, the Diocesan Superintendent of Schools, and local health officials. All students and teachers will be prepared for an immediate shift to remote learning. No essential items will be left in school overnight and a continuity of operations plan to ensure continued remote learning will occur. Individual plans have been created at each school utilizing the support of a threat mitigation and emergency management firm.

Based on parent feedback, teacher feedback from cross-school Curriculum Leadership Team (CLT) meetings and surveys, and feedback from principals, 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 principal know now so we can plan accordingly.



### ALL CLASS STANDARDS

- Use an online Learning Management System (LMS) such as Google Classroom as directed by the school principal 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 be the primary method of instruction and will be aligned to the curriculum
- Each student will receive 1-1 or small-group differentiated instruction
- Live sessions for specials (e.g. art, language, music, P.E., etc.) will occur as directed by the school principal

### **Kindergarten through Grade 3**

- Synchronous, live whole group instruction will be the primary method of instruction 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 regarding English/language arts, reading, and math
- Live sessions for specials (e.g. art, language, music, P.E., etc.) will occur as directed by the school principal

### **Grade 4 and 5**

- Synchronous, live whole group instruction will be the primary method of instruction and will cover: religion, English/language arts, math, science, and social studies
- Each student will receive small-group differentiated instruction regarding English/language arts and math
- Live sessions for specials (e.g. art, language, music, P.E., etc.) will occur as directed by the school principal

### **Middle School**

- Synchronous, live whole group instruction will be the primary method of instruction for each departmentalized content area (e.g. English/language arts, math, science, social studies, and religion)
- Each student will receive individual or small-group differentiated instruction regarding 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 the school principal



## 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 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.

#### **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, and many schools will offer access to a qualified social worker. Our goal at all of the schools is to help any student or family that needs support in the transition back to school.

#### **Financial Support**

Due to the very real financial impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, some families currently face overwhelming hardships. In response, the Tomorrow's Hope Foundation has raised the maximum award per student to \$3,500 (from \$2,500) for the 2020-2021 school year. Thanks to the generous support of all who contribute to the Tomorrow's Hope Foundation, more children will be able to return to their school communities for the support they need—academically, emotionally, and spiritually.



### **FACULTY AND STAFF SUPPORT**

#### **Professional Development and Virtual Hours**

Through the late summer early fall the Curriculum Leaders and Department of Education staff will increase training and support for teachers on the use and implementation of essential tools used for our highly successful 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 in new COVID-19 Operating Procedures, disinfection protocols, and syndromic surveillance. 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 every faculty and staff member at every school has access to a qualified and licensed counselor, so we can help any faculty or staff member who needs support in the transition back to school.



## **ADDITIONAL SUPPORT**

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

Visit the websites below for additional resources to help keep you and your family safe:

**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**

## **CONTACT US**

For questions, or more information regarding these guidelines, please contact us:

### **Morning Star Initiative**

Website: <https://www.morningstarinitiative.org/>

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### **Department of Education**

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