



RETURN TO SCHOOL ROADMAP

Grand Traverse Area Catholic Schools are committed to providing excellence in spiritual, academic, and social formation while adapting to the challenges presented by the COVID-19 pandemic. In creating this roadmap, both the [MI Safe Schools Roadmap](#) and public health data and protocols provided by the [Grand Traverse County Health Department](#) and the [Centers for Disease Control](#) were referenced.

For more detailed information, please refer to the accompanying attachments or our website, www.gtacs.org.

In the coming year, we will also rely – as we always do – on the teachings of our Catholic faith with regard to our care for one another.

Love is patient; love is kind; love is not envious or boastful or arrogant or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice in wrongdoing but rejoices in the truth. It bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. I Corinthians 4-7

Guiding Principles

The following principles have guided the development of this document:

- Face-to-face education is best for students, and in general, extended school closures harm students. Continuation of in-person learning should be preserved as much as possible.
- Although data indicates that risk of serious illness is lower for children, the protection of all human life – including immunocompromised children, older adults, and others at higher risk – is a shared responsibility between school and families and requires a variety of mitigation practices.
- Despite our best efforts, members of our school family will become ill, and we must respond with compassion and prudence.

Partnership with Parents

Our school has been providing a high quality, Christ-centered education since 1877, and we intend to persevere despite the challenging times. Thank you for your continued partnership. For the good of all in our school community, please make sure you communicate any extenuating circumstances or changes with us.

OUR RESPONSIBILITIES

What the School Will Do

To protect the health of others and to help preserve the continuity of in-person instruction, Grand Traverse Area Catholic Schools will do the following:

- Require students and staff report symptoms and/or exposures daily.
- Create healthy environments (e.g., ensuring proper ventilation, cleaning and disinfecting frequently touched surfaces).
- Promote healthy behaviors to reduce virus spread (e.g. social distancing, washing hands and wearing cloth face coverings).
- Put in place healthy operations (e.g., schedule adjustments, keeping students in small groups).
- Be prepared when someone gets sick.

What Parents/Guardians Should Do

To protect the health of others and to help maintain continuity of in-person instruction, please follow these important protocols:

- Monitor family members for signs of infectious illness and report student health status daily via the parent portal (see next page for additional information).
- Send each student to school with a face mask each day.
 - a. Masks should cover the nose and mouth.
 - b. Masks should be clean and simple (no distracting designs, etc.)
 - c. Face shields are not a replacement for masks.
 - d. Please ensure that each student has a spare mask at school (please label your masks).
 - e. If your student is unable to wear a mask for health reasons, please alert your school principal and provide a doctor's note.
- Keep students at home when ill or after exposure to COVID-19. Follow the health guidelines for isolating, self-care, testing, medical attention, and returning to school.
- Read all school updates.

REPORTING SYMPTOMS

Our greatest desire is for in-person learning to continue throughout the school year. To protect the health of all and keep symptoms and risk factors top-of-mind, we will be enacting the following new procedures:

- Families (primary contact) will receive a text alert each day at 6:45 am with a reminder to verify student health prior to the start of the school day.
- Parents will use the parent portal (formerly known as ParentsWeb but now part of the FACTS Student Information System) to report symptoms or the absence thereof. It is a simple, three question query that will take less than a minute to complete. Instructions will be emailed to you.

1. **Does your child feel feverish or have a high fever?**
2. **Has your child felt unwell in the last three days? (fever or chills, cough, shortness of breath or difficulty breathing, fatigue, muscle or body aches, headache, new loss of taste or smell, sore throat, congestion or runny nose, nausea or vomiting, and/or diarrhea)?**
3. **Have you or your child been in contact with a person who has COVID-19?**

School offices will receive a report of all students who have not completed their daily questionnaire and follow-up will be required.

ATTENDANCE DECISIONS

Do not go to school when [you are ill](#) or when [you have been in contact](#) with someone known to have COVID-19. This applies to everyone – staff, students, and volunteers.

This is not the time to “heroically” go to school when you may be ill; likewise, it is not a time to take time off from school because the mere mention of a particular symptom makes it possible. Let us all do our best to be honest, vigilant, self-disciplined, and caring for one another and ourselves.

When considering whether it is safe to return to school after illness or exposure, members of our community are asked to follow the protocols developed by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, summarized below:

I think or know I had COVID-19, and I had symptoms

You can be with others after

- At least 10 days since symptoms first appeared **and**
- At least 24 hours with no fever without fever-reducing medication **and**
- Symptoms have improved

Depending on your healthcare provider’s advice and availability of testing, you might get tested to see if you still have COVID-19. If you are tested, you can be around others when you have no fever, respiratory symptoms have improved, and you receive two negative test results in a row, at least 24 hours apart.

I tested positive for COVID-19 but had no symptoms

If you continue to have no symptoms, you can be with others after:

- 10 days have passed since test

Depending on your healthcare provider’s advice and availability of testing, you might get tested to see if you still have COVID-19. If you will be tested, you can be around others after you receive two negative test results in a row, at least 24 hours apart.

I have a weakened immune system (immunocompromised) due to a health condition or medication. When can I be around others?

[People with conditions that weaken their immune system](#) might need to stay home longer than 10 days. Talk to your healthcare provider for more information.

I have been around a person with COVID-19

Anyone who has **close contact** with someone with COVID-19 should stay home for 14 days **after exposure**.

HEALTHY ENVIRONMENT

Facilities and Cleaning

In preparation for in-person learning, many modifications have been made to our school facilities and cleaning capabilities/protocols.

- Plexiglass dividers will be placed in offices and other areas where face-to-face contact is necessary. Offices and screening points will be the primary areas impacted.
- Three hundred sixty (360) new hand sanitizing stations have been added to classrooms, hallways, and offices.
- HVAC systems have been optimized to move more air and increase fresh air into the buildings.
- Drinking fountains have been disabled; personal water bottle refill stations will remain available.
- Floors are being marked to delineate appropriate social distancing.
- Desks are being arranged to face toward the front of the classroom when possible and space between seats is being increased.
 - Faculty and staff will maintain recommended spacing between themselves and students
- If a classroom has windows that can open, they will be open as much as possible, weather permitting. Considerations will be made for students with allergy-induced asthma.
- GTACS has identified and designated a quarantine area in each building along with a staff person to care for those who become ill.
- Electrostatic disinfecting machines have been purchased for each school. This technology allows for the safest and best application of disinfectants. Each facility will be regularly sanitized after hours using the new electrostatic disinfecting equipment.
- Frequently touched surfaces including light switches, doors, benches, and bathrooms, will undergo cleaning at least every four hours with either an EPA-approved disinfectant or diluted bleach solution.
- Libraries, computer labs, arts/music, physical education, support and enrichment, and other hands-on classrooms will undergo cleaning after every class period with either an EPA-approved disinfectant or diluted bleach solution.
- Student desks will be wiped down or sprayed with either an EPA-approved disinfectant or diluted bleach solution after every class period.
- We will ensure safe and correct use and storage of cleaning and disinfecting products, including storing products securely away from children, and with adequate ventilation when staff use products.
- Staff members are receiving additional training on the most effective cleaning and sanitizing methods.
- Students will keep personal items separate in individual lockers or cubbies.
- Cleaning of manipulatives and other classroom learning equipment including electronics will be conducted on a regular basis.
- Classrooms now have a kit for minor medical care to minimize unnecessary traffic to the office.
- Each classroom will have access to a thermometer. Some entrances will also be equipped with touchless temperature scanning stations.
- School visitors, contractors, and other guests entering the building will be screened for symptoms, wear a mask, and wash/sanitize hands prior to entering. A record, including date and time, will be kept of non-school employees or other visitors entering and exiting the building.

HEALTHY BEHAVIORS

Facial Covering (Mask) Wearing

The goal of ensuring continuity of learning requires us to observe many precautionary measures that will also help protect the most vulnerable members of our community.

Mask General Requirements

- Masks may be homemade or disposable level-one (basic) grade surgical masks. Gaiter-style masks are allowed. Face shields are not allowed.
- Masks will be worn by staff when safe distancing cannot be attained.
- Masks will be worn by all students, staff, and bus drivers during school transportation.
- Students who are medically unable to tolerate a mask may be exempted from this requirement by providing a note from a qualified physician; this information is confidential and should be respected as such. Please alert your school principal to this prior to the start of the school year.
- Please ensure that students have a clean mask (and a spare one) at school each day, that it covers the nose and mouth, and that it is labeled with the student name.

Mask Requirements by Grade Level

Kindergarten-Fifth Grade

- Masks are an important part of our mitigation strategy and their use is highly encouraged – and at times, required.
- Masks are required for teachers and students at times when there are larger groups of people or if traveling in or about shared spaces
 - Arrival and Dismissal
 - Bathrooms
 - Hallways
 - Lunchroom until seated
- When children are inside of a classroom, masks may be worn if desired but are not required. During certain activities, masks may be worn at the teacher’s discretion.
- When teachers are inside of a classroom, teacher masks will be worn unless they are in designated “teaching spaces” such as in front of the class at the board, working at their desk, or instructing/reading from a common reading space.

Preschool

- In Preschool, in accordance with LARA guidelines, masks are not currently required for students. Parents may choose to have their child wear a mask or have one available.
- When teachers are inside of a classroom, teacher masks will be worn unless they are in designated “teaching spaces” such as in front of the class at the board, working at their desk, or instructing/reading from a common reading space.

Middle School and High School

- In Grades 6-12, students will be required to wear their masks when they move about in the buildings (e.g., in the hallways, in the lunch lines, in the bathrooms). When seated in the classroom, masks will be encouraged but not required except when working in proximity to the teacher or other students.
 - Classrooms will have a designated area from which a teacher may teach without wearing a mask. This “teaching zone” will provide for recommended distancing between teachers and students. When the teacher leaves that area or a student enters into it, masks will be worn.
 - Classrooms have been reconfigured to increase spacing.
- Students and staff members are encouraged to wear a mask *even when it is not required* to do so.

Emphasizing Hygiene Habits

GTACS will support healthy hygiene behaviors in the following ways:

- Teaching and reinforcing proper handwashing techniques.
- Frequent sanitizing and handwashing will occur throughout the day.
- Educating staff and students on how to cough and sneeze into their elbows, or to cover with a tissue. Proper disposal of tissues and handwashing after tissue use will be emphasized.
- Providing ample supplies of soap, hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol, paper towels, and tissues – plus signs reinforcing proper handwashing techniques.
- Soap and hand sanitizer dispensers will be regularly checked and refilled.
- The sharing of personal items and supplies such as writing utensils will be discouraged; when it is necessary, isopropyl wipes will be used for sanitizing.
- Signs will be posted to indicate proper social distancing and hygiene practices.

HEALTHY OPERATIONS

Lunch, Physical Education, Recess, and Large Group Gatherings

- Back-to-school open houses/orientation events will be reformatted to reduce contact and increase physical spacing.
- Physical education classes will be modified for safe distancing among participants.
- Food service will be provided in the safest possible way.
 - Lunch lines will allow for safe distancing.
 - Lunch times will be modified so fewer students will be dining at once.
 - Additional areas may be utilized to facilitate proper distancing.
 - Preschoolers will eat lunch in their classrooms.
 - Masks will be worn while in line or moving about in the building.
 - The lunch menu will be simplified with no self-service.
 - Disposable utensils will be utilized.
- Elementary/middle school playground/recess times will be adjusted so fewer students are at recess during any particular time; there will be limits on the number of students that can use a particular piece of playground equipment at once. Playground equipment and sporting goods will be sanitized regularly.
- Traditional events and retreats will be evaluated on a case-by-case basis.

Elementary After School Enrichment and Preschool-5th Child Care (St. Joseph Club)

- School day protocols will apply to all St. Joseph Club staff, enrichment instructors, students and designated classroom areas throughout enrichment and after school care.
- St. Joseph Club mixes children across age levels (Preschool 3s, Preschool 4s/PreK, K-2, 3-5) Some K-5 enrichment classes group children across ages. Designated areas will be utilized for children of mixed ages.
- After school care is designed for working parents. Please use this service out of necessity.

Athletics

- GTACS will comply with all guidance published by Michigan High School Athletic Association (MHSAA) and the National Federation of State High School Associations (NFHS) along with best practices as set forth by the Centers for Disease Control (CDC).
- Participants should confirm that they are healthy and without any symptoms prior to any event.
- Students, faculty, and staff will use proper hand hygiene techniques before and after every practice, event, or other gatherings.
- Equipment will be sanitized before and after use.
- Each participant will use a clearly marked water bottle for individual use. There will be no sharing of this equipment.
- Handshakes, fist bumps, and other unnecessary contacts will be discouraged.
- Inter-school competitions will be held provided masks are worn if school transportation is provided. Buses will be cleaned and sanitized before and after every use.
- Spectators will be allowed as per most current MHSAA and State-mandated guidelines. Attention will be given to entry and exit points to prevent crowding.



- Large-scale indoor spectator events will follow MHSAA guidelines. Large-scale outdoor spectator or stadium events will be limited as per MHSAA and State guidelines.
- Indoor weight rooms and physical conditioning activities that require shared equipment will follow the latest MHSAA guidelines for safe usage. Outdoor physical conditioning activities are allowed while maintaining social distancing.
- We have contracted with a streaming service for the broadcast of a limited number of competitions via the Internet. A small fee will apply for users.

Parent Meetings, Classroom Visits and Volunteering

- Parent meetings may take place over the phone, through video conferencing or in-person provided personal safety protocols are followed.
- Visitors to the school will be limited and screened upon entry.

Shared Time Classrooms/Special Services

- We will work with TCAPS and the TBAISD to ensure the delivery of special services and our shared time courses can continue in a safe manner.

Mass and Sacraments

- Students at all grade levels will still have access to our Lord through Mass and other faith opportunities.
- We will continue to worship God in accordance with the latest Diocesan guidelines which may be found on [their website](#).

Distance Learning Contingencies

GTACS families can be confident in knowing that we have built upon the distance learning experience of spring 2020 and are better prepared to help individual students or our entire school community – should the need arise.

We will provide online learning support for students whose circumstances require it.

- Immaculate Conception Elementary (K-5) will utilize the Google Classroom platform
- St. Elizabeth Ann Seton will utilize the Moodle platform
- St. Francis will utilize the Moodle platform

A temporary school closure could be deemed necessary by the Health Department or mandated by the State. Distance learning plans have been worked upon since spring and are continually being updated.

CDC INFO

The following are excerpts from the current Centers for Disease Control and Prevention guidelines for schools. Parents may visit this [website](#) for information related to your particular circumstances/concerns.

1. Scientific studies suggest that COVID-19 transmission among children in schools may be low. Based on current data, the rate of infection among younger school children, and from students to teachers, has been low, especially if proper precautions are followed.
 - a. Adolescents aged 10-17 may be more likely to become infected with SARS-CoV-2 than children younger than age 10, ^[7]^[8] but adolescents do not appear to be at higher risk of developing severe illness. ^[9]
 - b. Children and adults with certain [underlying medical conditions](#) are at [increased risk of severe illness](#) from COVID-19.
2. Extended school closure is harmful to children. It can lead to severe learning loss.
3. Extended school closures are harmful to children's development of social and emotional skills.
4. Currently, the most effective way to reduce the spread of SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes COVID-19, is using multiple mitigation strategies in combination. This may include students, teachers, and staff staying home when sick; appropriately covering coughs and sneezes; wearing cloth face coverings; social distancing; cleaning and disinfecting frequently touched surfaces; and washing hands often with soap and water or using an alcohol-based hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol.
5. Administrators should make decisions in collaboration with local health officials based on a number of factors, including the [level of community transmission](#), whether cases are identified among students, teachers, or staff, what other indicators local public health officials are using to assess the status of COVID-19, and whether student, teacher, and staff cohorts are being implemented within the school.

FAQs

Updated August 5, 2020

GOVERNANCE AND DECISION-MAKING

Who makes decisions regarding whether our schools remain open or closed?

Superintendent Buell, as the delegate appointed by the Bishop, makes such decisions on behalf of our school system. He does so in consultation with the School Advisory Board, the Office of Diocesan Schools, and our local pastors.

What happens if we move to different phase of the MI SAFE START plan?

Our Return to School Roadmap meets guidelines for Phase 5 and positions us well in the event that the area regresses to Phase 4. The Governor may order the closure of schools in Phases 1-3.

PREPARING FOR SCHOOL

How can I help my student prepare?

Parents and guardians can prepare for the school year by helping your student(s) understand the importance of mitigation strategies. Try out different mask styles to see which is the most comfortable for your student. Allow them to choose one they like best, as long as it meets the guidelines.

FACE COVERINGS

Will students be required to wear masks?

Yes, mask wearing is one of many mitigation strategies that our schools have adopted in preparation for the upcoming school year. In general, students will be expected to wear masks when moving about outside the classroom or when they are not able to distance from one another or their teachers. LARA does not recommend masks for preschoolers.

Will faculty/staff be required to wear masks?

Yes, adults in the building will wear masks except when they are able to distance themselves from others. Teachers will be able to teach from within a designated “safe zone” without a mask but will mask up if working with students at their desks. Visitors will also be required to wear masks. Of course, anyone who is exempt from wearing a mask for health reasons will not be expected to wear one.

Can a face shield be worn in place of a face mask?

No, the CDC does not recommend face shields as a substitute for masks.

Is there a recommended style of mask?

No, we only require that it be clean and simple (no distracting messages or graphics) and that it cover the mouth and nose. Gaiter-style masks are acceptable. Find the style that is the most comfortable and practical for your student. Involve your student in the selection of their mask.

Is someone who previously contracted COVID-19 and has recovered required to wear a mask?

Yes, since much remains unknown about the antibody protection provided by previous infection, those who have previously recovered from COVID-19 are expected to wear a mask unless otherwise exempt.

Will the school provide face masks?

No, each member of our school community is asked to arrive at school with a clean mask each day, and to have a spare mask on-hand.

MONITORING AND REPORTING SYMPTOMS**Should I take my child's temperature every day?**

Yes, since a high fever is one indicator of COVID-19, you should check temperatures before heading out to school.

How do I report symptoms?

Until further notice, you will be asked to verify the absence of symptoms before coming to school by completing the daily health questionnaire on the parent portal. A text will be sent out each morning to remind you of this responsibility.

What happens if someone in my child's class tests positive for COVID-19?

Members of our school community will be notified of all confirmed COVID-19 cases via email. The County Health Department will also be notified, and their guidelines will be used to inform decisions from that point forward.