



HOLMESBURG
CHRISTIAN ACADEMY

Big Thinking. Small School.

Reopening Safely Plan

July 22, 2020

We have adopted this plan, copying and adapting the “Advancing Education Safely” plan created by the School District of Philadelphia. It makes sense to us to have (as much as possible) one set of guidelines for COVID-19 prevention in schools, so that parents, students, and staff are hearing the same things from the many different organizations involved in education in the city.

The major difference between the School District plan and HCA’s plan is that, instead of two days in school and three days at home, **HCA students will participate in in-person schooling five days per week.** Our primary focus is on education in the classroom, as we feel we can do it safely, and this is where children learn best.

Faith Not Fear!

The decisions regarding opening the school, and how exactly to open the school, are decisions that are a balance of wisdom and priorities. On the one hand, we are not afraid of COVID-19, because Jesus has conquered sickness and death. At the same time, we must be wise about COVID-19, because we don’t want to bring sickness and death to others. We can’t eliminate this risk, but we can reduce it significantly.

In the midst of a pandemic, we cannot neglect to “live life” and care for our children. The goal cannot be simply to “not die” – it has to always be to fully LIVE. One of the best ways we can care for our children and help them to live life fully is to return them to the normal patterns of their lives, including the ability to learn at school and socialize with their peers. We all know that farms and food and grocery stores are essential. But for the well-being of our children, education is just as essential. And community is essential, especially for children.

Generations before us knew this and continued to educate children in the midst of war, famine, and even polio and measles epidemics. Christians throughout history have rushed to help when things were most dangerous and society was consumed by fear. In setting this path for HCA, we are doing so in faith, not fear, and with the desire to, as safely as possible, help our children live their lives to the fullest, trusting Jesus in all things.

Following the School District Plan: Basic Guidelines

Healthy Hygiene Practices

Experts agree that routine healthy hygiene practices are a foundational measure to protect against COVID-19. Everyone in our school buildings will be required to:

- Wear a face mask (or, for younger grades, a face shield) that covers the mouth and nose at all times.
- Exercise hand hygiene (hand washing or sanitizing) upon arrival to school, before eating, before putting on and taking off masks, and when using the restroom.
- Use soap and water to wash all surfaces of their hands for at least 20 seconds.
- Use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol if hand washing is not feasible. Hand sanitizer will be provided in all buildings.
- Avoid touching eyes, nose or mouth.
- Practice good respiratory etiquette, including covering coughs and sneezes with a tissue or elbow.

Additionally, students and staff must stay home if they are feeling sick or have any symptom associated with COVID-19. Those who become sick at school or work will be sent home immediately.

Social Distancing

The cohort model is the best approach and will be implemented when feasible. A cohort is defined as, the same group of students who stay in the same classroom throughout the day with the same teacher, and do not mix with other students to the extent feasible. Increasing the physical distance between individuals can also reduce the risk of transmission so the following requirements will be in place:

- All individuals must maintain at least six feet of social distance to the extent possible, following visual cues from signage, floor decals and colored tape indicating social distancing parameters and traffic flow through building entrances, exits and other common use areas. Mitigation efforts will be put in place when six feet is not feasible.
- Layouts for desks, tables, chairs, and other items will be implemented to promote social distancing in classrooms and common areas to maintain six feet of social distancing to the maximum extent possible.
- No more than four people may occupy the elevator at one time, with each person standing in each corner of the elevator.
- In-person meetings should take place in a virtual setting whenever possible.
- The teacher lunchroom is closed for gathering. Teachers and staff should eat lunch in their classrooms, outside, or even in their cars, away from others.
- Bathrooms that have multiple stalls are limited to two children at a time.
- Other than the assigned office staff, staff cannot gather to work in the main office or in another staff member's office.
- When feasible, the maximum number of individuals, including students, teachers and staff, allowed in the same classroom is 25.
- We will consider using alternative spaces like the gym or the sanctuary to accommodate classes or activities with larger numbers of students when class sizes cannot be reduced.
- To the maximum extent possible, teachers' desks should be at least six feet from the nearest student desk, and all student desks should face forward.
- Non-essential visitors and volunteers will be restricted.

Face Masks and Other Face Coverings

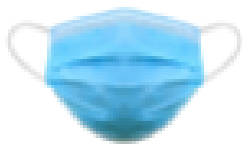
Since respiratory droplets are the primary way that COVID-19 is transmitted, masks are among the most critical components of risk reduction. Employees, students, visitors, and contractors are required to wear a face mask or other approved face covering that covers their mouth and nose while on school grounds, with limited exceptions. Other requirements and provisions are as follows:

- **Students and teachers in grades Pre-K - 5 may wear face shields instead of masks** to better facilitate interactions between teachers and younger students who rely on visual and facial cues. A limited supply of face shields will be available through the school at the beginning of the year, and we will make a decision how parents can provide them moving forward.
- **Students and teachers in grade 6 - 8 will be required to wear masks.** Parents are asked to provide appropriate masks for their children.
- Acceptable masks include disposable surgical masks, cloth masks purchased or made from household items, and gaiters. Clothing and household items (like scarfs, t-shirts, sweatshirts, or towels) are not acceptable for use as masks. Masks may be in various patterns or colors but must not have words or logos on them.
- Exceptions to mask requirements will be made if wearing a mask is not possible due to medical conditions, disability impact, or other health or safety factors. Face shields will be a viable alternative to masks for those with medical, behavioral or other conditions precluding them from wearing masks. Completion of the Mask Exemption Form by a licensed medical provider will be required stating that the person is exempt from wearing any form of face covering.
- Wearing face masks or shields is required for everyone on school buses.
- Students will be instructed when they may take “mask breaks” and remove their masks, such as during mealtimes, and when outdoors and more than six feet apart from other people. Mask breaks will be 15 minutes maximum.

Approved Face Masks

These are the types of masks approved for use at HCA. Masks may be of any color or pattern, but must cover the nose and mouth, and must not have any letters, numbers, or words.

Disposable Mask



Cloth Mask



Neck Gaiters



Face Shields
(Pre-K through 5th only)



Daily Health Screenings

All employees will be required to complete daily self-reporting by completing an online Pre-Entry Screening Form to verify they are symptom-free and have not had recent exposure to someone with COVID-19. Employees are required to report if they test positive for COVID-19, if they develop symptoms consistent therewith, or if they are self-isolating due to suspected or known exposure to COVID-19.

All families will be required to conduct a daily screening of their children at home before their children leave for school. This will involve taking temperatures, monitoring for COVID-19 symptoms, and recent exposure to someone diagnosed with COVID-19. If any statements on the Pre-Arrival Screening checklist

are true, the family must keep the student at home and contact the student's healthcare provider. At the start of the school year, families will be required to sign the COVID-19 School Health & Safety Agreement which describes their commitment to keeping their children home when sick and to seeking appropriate medical care.

In addition, teachers will conduct a daily temperature check of their students. Any student with a fever (above 100.4° F) and any symptoms consistent with COVID-19 will be removed from the classroom and wait to be picked up by parents. Students who have a fever or symptoms of COVID-19 will not be permitted to ride the bus home and must be picked up immediately.

COVID-19 Testing

Current guidance from the CDC and PDPH does not recommend testing of all students and staff prior to their initial return to school or work. Therefore, HCA is not currently planning to offer or require COVID-19 testing of its students and employees prior to school opening. PDPH recommends testing in the presence of symptoms, and/or when an individual has been exposed to someone with COVID-19. Staff and students' families should consult with health care providers concerning further details on testing.

Response to Positive COVID-19 Test

Consistent with PA regulations for communicable diseases, if an individual in a school or office is confirmed, suspects, or has been in contact with someone confirmed to have COVID-19, HCA will notify the Philadelphia Department of Public Health and receive direction on next steps that could include, and are not limited to, whether to quarantine the class or school; providing necessary information for PDPH to conduct contact tracing; and when individuals can resume school or work.

Return to School

Students or staff who have a confirmed or suspected case of COVID-19 must remain home until they receive a negative COVID-19 test result, or until all of the following are true: at least 10 days has passed since the onset of symptoms AND fever free when off anti-fever medications for 3 days AND symptoms are improving.

Cleaning and Facility Enhancements

HCA will be implementing guidelines for deep cleaning, disinfecting, and improved ventilation in accordance with best practices from PDPH, Pennsylvania Department of Education, and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. As we work to prepare for re-opening, we will continue to monitor and implement any new best practices.

- HCA will be equipped with EPA registered COVID-19 virucide and disinfecting equipment/supplies to support increased cleaning protocols. Custodial staff will be trained in daily cleaning practices, specialized/responsive cleaning, enhanced disinfecting techniques and how to respond to emergency situations as they arise.
- Hand Sanitizer Stations with at least a 60% alcohol-based sanitizer will be mounted and maintained inside entrances/exits, entryways of cafeterias and bathrooms, at the ends of hallways and inside of Health Suites. Classrooms will also be provided with hand sanitizer and cleaning supplies.
- Identified 'high touch points' will be disinfected at a higher frequency of at least every four hours.
- Signage will be posted identifying high touch areas and cleaning frequency.
- A cleaning/sanitizing checklist will be created and completed by the custodial staff responsible for the cleaning.
- Custodial staff will ensure that all handwashing sinks are operational and have clean running water, soap and paper towels. If a sink becomes inoperable, immediate steps will be taken to repair it or a hand sanitizer will be provided in its place until the repair occurs.
- To increase ventilation, we will replace air filters, ensure windows are operable to allow for increased outdoor air flow, and increase circulation of air by adding portable fans.

Implementing the Plan at HCA

Beginning and Ending the School Day

To provide for fewer children on each bus, the school district is making multiple runs, and has scheduled our school for the earliest time slot. **Our new school day is 7:30am to 2:20pm.**

- Teachers and staff will arrive at school at 6:45am to prepare for students.
- Students will arrive between 7:00am and 7:30am.
- To keep the various classes apart as much as possible, we will utilize additional building entrances for student arrival and dismissal.
 - Preschool and Kindergarten will use the gym entrance.
 - 1st and 2nd grade will use the entrance on the bakery side down the stairs
 - 3rd and 4th grade will use the entrance on the bakery side at street level
 - 5th grade will use the main ramp entrance to the school
 - Middle School will report directly to the Middle School yard
- When entering the building, students will go directly to their classrooms.
- At the end of the day, students will remain in their classrooms until called for dismissal by bus or for parent pickup. Dismissal will occur from the various entrances as with arrival.
- Because we are using the additional entrances, the entire school property, including the driveway, will be blocked with cones at arrival and dismissal. As you may have to park a little further from the school, please be kind to our neighbors and park and walk safely.

During the School Day

- Because of the earlier hours, we will plan for TWO snack times instead of one. Please send your child with an extra snack.
- We will keep the windows open as much as possible, so the classrooms may be slightly warmer or colder than students prefer. Provide your child with appropriate uniform clothing (shorts in September, hunter green uniform sweaters during the colder months) to keep them comfortable.
- Classes will have scheduled times for restroom use. Encourage your child to make use of the scheduled times so they do not have to go at other times.
- Students will have assigned seats in the classroom.
- Desks will be spaced six feet apart, as much as possible.
- All desks will face the same direction.
- Students will not share school supplies and will be responsible for having their own materials.
- Students will be assigned specific hooks or cubbies to keep their things separate from other students.
- Please label all of your student's belongings so that they are easily identifiable.

Eating and Drinking

- Students will be required to clean their hands with soap and water or an alcohol-based hand sanitizer prior to and immediately after eating.
- Students will eat lunch in their classroom. Make sure that they have food items that can be neatly eaten at their desks, and napkins and any plastic utensils they might need. Remember, there are no refrigerators or microwaves available to students.
- Students may not share food, snacks, or drinks with each other.
- Water fountains will not be available for students to use. Students should bring a clear, plastic water bottle (not the disposable kind) so they have water during the day.

Academics

Addressing the Learning Gap

We understand that students may have experienced a learning loss because of the unusual end to the prior school year. Teachers will focus on building up core skills that the students may have missed, while pushing ahead to teach grade-level materials. In order to address deficits in ELA and Math, we will utilize the assessments provided in our online curriculum to create customized learning plans for students that provide additional resources for bringing their skills up to the appropriate level.

Remote Learning

For students who are sick or must remain at home for up to a few weeks because of a COVID-19 diagnosis or exposure:

- We will provide online assignments that allow the student to continue learning with their class.
- Assignments will be done through Jupiter, our online learning management system. We will also use our online curriculum resources for Math (Sadlier Full Access) and English (ThinkCentral).
- Students will primarily be assisted by a learning-at-home teacher who may be different than their usual classroom teacher.
- Students will have assigned “live” times each week to do a Zoom call with their learning-at-home teacher and can send messages any time through Jupiter.

For students who are unable to participate in on-site instruction for an extended period of time due to specific family health issues:

- This option is not generally available to families and is available on a case-by-case basis in specific situations where there is a documented medical reason for not returning to school (for instance, a parent with a compromised immune system for whom exposure is a severe risk).
- We will develop an online, self-paced curriculum for each student that mirrors the teaching in the classroom. The student may complete the entire year online or may return to the classroom when it is safe to do so.
- Students must be able to complete work independently, with support from parents, and make consistent progress in the assigned curriculum.
- Students will have a learning-at-home mentor teacher at HCA, but will also receive assistance from other teachers supporting online classes on behalf of HCA.

If the school is closed for a period of time by government authorities:

- All HCA classes will transition to an online setting.
- Classes will be taught by the usual classroom teachers.

In all cases:

- We will work with you to make sure each student has appropriate technology resources at home to enable the student to successfully complete assignments while at home.
- Attendance will continue to be taken each school day. The student must participate (as they are able) in online learning each school day.
- All work will be graded. Exceptions will be made for the inability to complete work because the student is sick. Documentation from a healthcare provider will be required.

Please note that we will not hold your child responsible for work they cannot complete for legitimate reasons, however, it is VERY important that learning continue and that your child keep up with the work in the classroom so that they can successfully rejoin their class when able.

Attendance

All students are expected to attend school five days per week, whether face-to-face or by remote learning, in alignment with state regulations and requirements. During both face-to-face and remote learning, teachers will mark student attendance. Staff will actively identify students who are not regularly attending class and assist with addressing the barriers preventing each student's attendance.

Grading

There will be the usual four marking periods, not adjusted for any periods of closure or learning at home. Students will be graded in the 2020-2021 school year according to HCA's official grading and promotion policies, which were temporarily suspended during the spring school closure. Exceptions will be made for the inability to complete work because the student is sick. Appropriate documentation from a healthcare provider will be requested.

Extra-Curricular Activities and Athletics

At this time, no extra-curricular activities are scheduled because guidelines recommend not mixing children from various classrooms in one activity, as this increases the risk for spread across the school community. When we are able to safely provide these important experiences, we will develop appropriate plans to engage in them safely. When we are able to offer athletic activities, the focus will be on individual skill building and socially-distanced activities.