



2020-21 Return to School Plan

LIVING OUR MISSION IN TODAY'S REALITY



CATHOLIC SCHOOLS

DIOCESE OF GRAND RAPIDS

LIVING OUR MISSION IN TODAY'S REALITY

2020-21 Return to School Plan

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July 22, 2020

Dear friends in Christ,

As we prepare to welcome students back to our Catholic schools safely and prudently in August, and to provide remote learning in circumstances that demand it, we have developed this resource describing fundamental protocols. Your school has been using these protocols to develop a specific plan for their local operations. I want now to share these diocesan protocols with you.

You will see that we developed these protocols through a thorough planning process. We have incorporated legal requirements from the State of Michigan, and are considering additional recommendations from the federal, state, and local levels. Our school leaders have been collaborating ever since school buildings closed in March. We also surveyed teachers and parents.

Through these survey results, we clearly heard from parents:

The school community, together in person, with safety and prudence, is greatly preferred and most highly valued

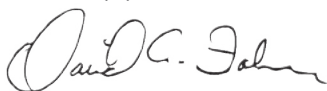
Gratitude for the extraordinary efforts of school leaders and teachers with remote learning

Communication, organization, and structure of remote learning need to improve for times when it is necessary

I am happy also to share information about COVID-19 tuition assistance. Bishop Walkowiak does not want the financial impact of the pandemic to keep any student from receiving the benefits of Catholic education, so he has made \$1 million from the diocese's rainy day fund available for COVID-19 tuition assistance. [Apply at CatholicSchools4U.org](https://www.catholicschools4u.org).

We have seen throughout these months that Catholic education is more valuable than ever! Our communities of faith and virtue offer a peaceful, safe and healthy school culture. In delivering our high quality curriculum, instruction, and assessment, we have the ability to deliver a personalized approach for each family. Thank you for your partnership in Catholic education.

Sincerely yours in Christ,



David A. Faber
Superintendent

Cathedral Square Center
360 Division Avenue South
Grand Rapids, MI 49503

T 616.246.0590
F 616.551.5650

[CatholicSchools4U.org](https://www.CatholicSchools4U.org)

DEFINING CHARACTERISTICS OF OUR CATHOLIC SCHOOLS

- Centered in the person of Jesus Christ
- Contributing to the evangelizing mission of the Church
- Committed to educate the whole child
- Distinguished by excellence
- Steeped in a Catholic world view
- Sustained by Gospel witness
- Shaped by communion and community
- Accessible to all students
- Established by the expressed authority of the bishop

OUR MISSION

We are an alliance of Catholic schools where Christ illuminates learning and life

OUR VISION

An alliance of Catholic schools expanding outstanding educational ministry



OUR PLANNING PROCESS

Four planning teams

From April through June, principals, the superintendent, assistant superintendent, educational technology specialist, and school board members collaborated in teams focused on:

- Catholic mission and identity
- Academic excellence
- Operational vitality
- Governance and leadership

Two surveys

We gathered the feedback of parents and teachers regarding remote learning during the closure of school buildings.

Weekly meetings with all Catholic school leaders

Ongoing since March, these meetings focus on:

- National Standards and Benchmarks for Effective Catholic Elementary and Secondary Schools
- CDC guidelines and health expert consultation
- State and local officials' orders and recommendations

OUR PRIMARY GOAL

Opening schools for all students who are able to return to the classroom and for those who need a remote option as we begin the 2020-21 school year.

Bringing the entire learning community back together remains our aim to the maximum extent possible, given any restrictions that may be necessary at the time. Schools will operate both in-school and remote lessons according to their regular calendar of 180 days. Schools will plan systems and structures to meet the personal needs of each student and family to the extent possible while maintaining the integrity of the whole learning community. Our goal is to provide the most personalized options possible to meet the needs of each family and student.

CATHOLIC TRADITIONS AND PRACTICES

Whether learning in school or remotely, all schools will:

- Conduct morning prayer, highlighting the Church calendar, holy days, solemnities, feasts and memorials
- Offer a weekly school Mass
- Begin every lesson with prayer
- Reflect on Sunday Gospel readings in theology classes
- Provide in-school opportunities for reconciliation and adoration of the Blessed Sacrament
- Conduct retreats for faculty and students

Individual schools may offer other Catholic practices particular to their culture and traditions.

BISHOP WALKOWIAK ANNOUNCES UP TO \$1 MILLION IN COVID-19 TUITION ASSISTANCE

As we prepare for a safe return to school, Bishop Walkowiak wants to make sure no student is left behind

- COVID-19 has had a financial impact on many families within our Catholic school community
- Additional significant tuition assistance has been made available to returning and new families for the 2020-21 school year
- The financial impact of COVID-19 should not keep your family from the benefits of Catholic education!

Bishop Walkowiak is grateful that school leaders, teachers, and families partnered for a strong finish in the 2019-20 school year

- We completed a full, 180-day academic year
- We supported parents and families through personalized instructional methods
- We collaborated in diocesan-wide efforts to meet the needs of all students and families
- We provided opportunities for prayer and spiritual growth

[Apply at CatholicSchools4U.org!](https://CatholicSchools4U.org!)



IN-SCHOOL & REMOTE LEARNING

We are preparing to welcome students back into the school building. However, students may toggle between in-school and remote learning as necessary.

Remote learning for an entire school population will occur when:

- The local health department deems it necessary
- The state mandates building closure
- Weather conditions, power outage, or other emergencies require a local school to temporarily close

Remote learning for an individual student may occur when:

- The family of a student with medical conditions determines that the student is best served at this time through at-home remote learning
- A parent determines a student should not return to the school building and will consult with school leadership
- A student is home with any other illness

SUPPORTING REMOTE LEARNING WITH TECHNOLOGY

- Schools will increase student device quantity to best serve families during potential remote learning days
- Schools will continue to use the Diocese of Grand Rapids shared student information system, Infinite Campus, for accurate record keeping and student report cards
- **New to many schools** - schools will utilize the Diocese of Grand Rapids shared Google domain for common support and service
- **New to most schools** - schools will utilize the Diocese of Grand Rapids shared learning management system, Canvas, for organizing instructional materials and facilitating learning
- Common technology platforms throughout the diocese empower high quality and consistency among the alliance of Catholic schools
- Classrooms and teachers will be equipped with technology necessary to support individual students who are learning remotely

INCORPORATING CURRENT CDC GUIDELINES, STATE & LOCAL REQUIREMENTS: PHASE 4

Our Catholic schools are subject to legal requirements in the MI Safe Schools: Michigan's 2020-21 Return to School Roadmap. That plan works together with CDC guidelines and includes many additional recommendations which we are considering.

The state plan references six phases of the pandemic. In phases 1-3, school buildings are legally required to close, and all learning will occur remotely. In phase 4, our Catholic schools will open to students five days per week adhering to strict, legally-required or recommended safety protocols outlined below. In phase 5, Catholic schools will open five days per week with more flexibility to adopt protocols tailored to their community, as described on page 12. Phase 6 is post-pandemic.

[The complete state roadmap is available at this link.](#) Additionally, your Catholic school will communicate specific information you need to be well prepared for the start of school.

Personal protective equipment

- All staff will wear facial coverings when in classrooms, except (1) during meals and (2) unless face coverings cannot be medically tolerated as documented through written and signed verification by a physician
- All passengers and drivers will wear facial coverings when on a school bus, except (1) when eating and (2) unless face coverings cannot be medically tolerated as documented through written and signed verification by a physician, with parental consent
- All staff and all students in grades pre-kindergarten and up will wear facial coverings when in indoor hallways and common areas, except (1) during meals and (2) unless face coverings cannot be medically tolerated as documented through written and signed verification by a physician, with parental consent for students
- While facial coverings are not required in preschool classrooms by children ages 3 and 4, for the added safety of our students, families (especially their vulnerable family members), and our school staff, they will be strongly encouraged. Students will be asked to wear them to the best of their ability
- All students in grades kindergarten through 5, while not required to wear facial coverings while settled within their classroom cohort group, will be strongly encouraged. For the added safety of our students, families (especially their vulnerable family members), and our school staff, students will be consistently asked to wear their facial covering indoors at all times except when eating
- All staff and students in grades 6-12 will wear facial coverings, except (1) during meals and (2) unless face coverings cannot be medically tolerated as documented through written and signed verification by a physician, with parental consent
- Facial coverings may be homemade or disposable level one/basic-grade surgical masks

Hygiene

- Ensure adequate supplies to support healthy hygiene behaviors (including soap, hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol for safe use by staff and students, paper towels, tissues, and signs reinforcing proper handwashing techniques)
- Teach and reinforce handwashing with soap and water for at least 20 seconds and/or the safe use of hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol

Spacing, movement and access

- Space students as far apart as feasible in classrooms, whether desks or tables are utilized
- Post signage to indicate proper social distancing
- Place markers at six-foot intervals where line formation is anticipated
- Provide social distancing markers in waiting and reception areas
- Post signs on the doors of restrooms to indicate proper social distancing and hand hygiene techniques

Screening students and staff

- Schools will cooperate with the local public health department regarding implementing protocols for screening students and staff
- Identify and designate a quarantine area and a staff person to care for students and staff who develop signs or symptoms of COVID-19 at school
- Students and staff who become ill with signs or symptoms of COVID-19 will be placed in an identified quarantine area with a facial covering in place, if able, until they can be picked up. Identified person caring for these children/staff will wear a facial covering

- Educate staff and students on how to cough and sneeze into their elbows, or to cover with a tissue. Used tissues should be thrown in the trash and hands washed immediately using proper hand hygiene techniques
- Systematically and frequently check and refill soap and hand sanitizers
- Daily, provide opportunities for handwashing with soap and water by students and teachers
- Limit sharing of personal items and supplies
- Restrict entrance to the school to students and staff only. Family members or other non-staff adults are not allowed in the school building except under extenuating circumstances determined by school officials. All non-staff adults entering the building must be screened for symptoms using a monitoring form, wear a facial covering, and wash/sanitize hands prior to entering. Strict records, including date and time, should be kept of all non-staff adults entering and exiting the building
- Symptomatic students and staff sent home from school will stay home until they have tested negative or have completely recovered according to CDC guidelines
- Staff will conduct daily self-examinations, including a temperature check, prior to coming to work. If they exhibit any new or unusual symptoms as reported on the COVID-19 school monitoring form, they will stay home. Staff member will contact the school administrator

Testing protocols for students and staff and responding to positive cases

- Schools will cooperate with the local public health department regarding implementing protocols for screening students and staff
- Symptomatic students and staff will be kept home until they have tested negative for COVID-19 or have been released from isolation according to CDC guidelines
- Families will be notified of the presence of any laboratory positive or clinically diagnosed cases of COVID-19 in the classroom and/or school to encourage closer observation for any symptoms at home

Responding to positive cases among staff and students

- Schools cooperate with the local public health department if a confirmed case of COVID-19 is identified, and in particular, collect the contact information for any close contacts of the affected individual from two days before he or she showed symptoms to the time when he or she was last present at the school. The local health department will initiate contact tracing, following regular public health practice
- Notify local health officials, staff, and students immediately of any possible case of COVID-19 while maintaining confidentiality consistent with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and other applicable federal and state privacy laws

Food service, gathering, and extra-curricular activities

- Schools will prohibit indoor assemblies that bring together students from more than one classroom. School Masses will be allowed provided that all Diocese of Grand Rapids Mass guidelines are followed
- If cafeterias are used and six feet of distance between students is not possible, meal times should be staggered or physical barriers should be used. Serving and cafeteria staff will use barrier protection including gloves, face shields, and surgical masks
- Classrooms or outdoor areas can be used for students to eat meals at school

Athletics

- Schools will comply with all guidance published by Michigan High School Athletic Association (MHSAA) and the National Federation of State High School Associations (NFHS)
- Students, teachers, and staff must use proper hand hygiene techniques before and after every practice, event, or other gathering
- Every participant should confirm that they are healthy and without any symptoms prior to any event. On non-school days a monitoring form needs to be completed by all participants (this includes all adult volunteers, coaches and administrators)
- All equipment must be disinfected before and after use
- Each participant must use a clearly marked water bottle for individual use. There should be no sharing of this equipment
- Handshakes, fist bumps, and other unnecessary contact must not occur
- Indoor weight rooms and physical conditioning activities that require shared equipment are suspended. Outdoor physical conditioning activities are allowed while maintaining social distancing
- Large scale indoor spectator events are suspended. Large scale outdoor spectator or stadium events are limited to 100 people, and people not part of the same household must maintain six feet of distance from one another
- Spectators are allowed provided that facial coverings are used by observers and six feet of social distancing can be maintained at all times. Attention must be given to entry and exit points to prevent crowding

Cleaning

- 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, and other hands-on classrooms will undergo cleaning after every class period or when cohorts change classrooms, with either an EPA-approved disinfectant or diluted bleach solution
- Student desks will be wiped down with either an EPA-approved disinfectant or diluted bleach solution after every class period, or when cohorts change classrooms
- Playground structures will continue to undergo normal routine cleaning, but using an EPA-approved disinfectant is unnecessary
- Ensure safe and correct use and storage of cleaning and disinfection products, including storing products securely away from children, and with adequate ventilation when staff use products
- Staff must wear gloves, surgical masks, and face shields when performing all cleaning activities

Busing and student transportation (including extra-curricular activities and athletics)

- Schools who use public school district busing will defer all safety guidelines to those providers. The following is intended for schools who are the direct providers of busing services
- Schools will require the use of hand sanitizer before entering a school bus. Hand sanitizer will be supplied on the bus
- The bus driver, staff, and all students in grades preK-12, if medically feasible, will wear facial coverings while on the bus. Note: there may be situations where it is not safe for the bus driver to wear a facial covering. Decisions about these situations should be made on a case-by-case basis with local public health officials
- Schools will clean and disinfect transportation vehicles before and after every transit route. Children will not be present when a vehicle is being cleaned
- Schools will clean and disinfect frequently touched surfaces in the vehicle (e.g., surfaces in the driver's cockpit, hard seats, arm rests, door handles, seat belt buckles, light and air controls, doors and windows, and grab handles) prior to morning routes and prior to afternoon routes
- Schools will clean, sanitize, and disinfect equipment including items such as car seats, wheelchairs, walkers, and adaptive equipment being transported to schools daily
- Schools will create a plan for getting students home safely if they are not allowed to board the vehicle
- If a student becomes sick during the day, they will not use group transportation to return home and must follow protocols outlined above. If a driver becomes sick during the day, they will follow protocols for sick staff outlined above and will not return to drive students
- Weather permitting, doors and windows will be open when cleaning the vehicle and between trips to let the vehicles thoroughly air out

Spiritual, mental & social-emotional health

- Teachers will collaborate with the principal and/or student support services to facilitate communication with families and make student referrals to appropriate school, parish, and community resources
- Provide all staff with timely, responsive, and ongoing training/professional development

INCORPORATING CURRENT CDC GUIDELINES, STATE & LOCAL REQUIREMENTS: PHASE 5

In phase 5, Catholic schools will open five days per week considering the “strongly recommended” and “recommended” safety protocols from the MI Safe Schools: Michigan’s 2020-21 Return to School Roadmap. Local school leaders should work with the pastor, canonical administrator, board, and faculty in determining the specific safety protocol that will be adhered to within the local Catholic school in phase 5.

CATHOLIC EDUCATION: MORE VALUABLE THAN EVER

- We are communities of faith and virtue.
- We offer a peaceful, safe and healthy school culture.
- We have the ability to deliver a personalized approach for each family.
- Individual schools can tailor their schedules according to their families’ needs.
- We continue to align strategically with public schools and take full advantage of their services without being required to follow their model. Each Catholic school has the ability to be far more personalized than any district model.
- Dedicated teachers, staff and school leaders demonstrate the highest quality character and preparation.
- Students receive high-quality curriculum, instruction, and assessment.



OUR ALLIANCE

Our Catholic elementary schools

All Saints Academy, *Grand Rapids*

Assumption of the Blessed
Virgin Mary, *Belmont*

Corpus Christi Catholic School,
Holland

Divine Providence Academy,
Ravenna and Conklin

Holy Spirit, *Grand Rapids*

Holy Trinity, *Comstock Park*

Immaculate Heart of Mary,
Grand Rapids

Ludington Area Catholic School,
Ludington

Muskegon Catholic Central, *Muskegon*

Our Lady of Consolation, *Rockford*

Sacred Heart Academy, *Grand Rapids*

San Juan Diego Academy, *Wyoming*

SS. Peter & Paul, *Ionia*

St. Anthony of Padua, *Grand Rapids*

St. Charles Borromeo, *Greenville*

St. John Vianney, *Wyoming*

St. Joseph, *Pewamo*

St. Mary, *Big Rapids*

St. Mary, *Spring Lake*

St. Michael, *Remus*

St. Patrick, *Parnell*

St. Patrick, *Portland*

St. Paul the Apostle, *Grand Rapids*

St. Robert, *Ada*

St. Stephen, *East Grand Rapids*

St. Thomas the Apostle,
Grand Rapids

Our Catholic high schools

Catholic Central High School,
Grand Rapids

Muskegon Catholic Central,
Muskegon

Sacred Heart Academy,
Grand Rapids

St. Patrick, *Portland*

West Catholic High School,
Grand Rapids



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Office of Catholic Schools

Cathedral Square Center · 360 Division Avenue South · Grand Rapids, MI 49503

Tel 616.246.0590

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