



2020-21 Back-to-School Plan

Rev. 07/10/2020

Approach

Scripture teaches us that there is both a place for trusting God while putting aside fear and a place for planning for the safety of people. The story of Nehemiah courageously rebuilding the walls of Jerusalem for the protection of its people incorporate both of these ideas. It does not have to be one or the other. We hope that the plans to reopen the school for 2020-21 take into account both actively planning for the safety of our community and trusting God to act on our behalf.

For the last several months, the WC school board and administration have been engaged in research, consultation, and discussion with various officials, experts, and stakeholders on the question of how to reopen the school. Those groups have included government and public health authorities, scientists and medical professionals in the WC community, journal articles, and published research, faculty, parents, and students. As you can imagine, there is no consensus on many details. **Yet, we do believe that a reasonable and safe approach is contained in this plan that will allow us to begin school on the regularly scheduled August 20 date with students on campus full time.** In addition to starting on August 20 with students on campus fulltime, we do not plan to make any changes to the school calendar at this time. This plan has taken into account the best interest of our students while balancing that with the best interest of the broader community, including their families and our faculty and staff.

The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) has recently published guidance for the reopening of schools. Their recommendations substantially agreed with the advice coming from our medical advisory group. A few key ideas from their report:

- “The AAP strongly advocates that all policy considerations for the coming school year should start with the goal of having students physically present in school. No child should be excluded from school unless required to adhere to local public health mandates or because of unique medical needs.”
- “School policies must be flexible and nimble. They should be practical, feasible, and appropriate for a child and adolescent’s developmental stage.”

- “Although many questions remain, the preponderance of evidence indicates that children and adolescents are less likely to be symptomatic and less likely to have severe disease resulting from SARS-CoV-2 infection. Also, children may be less likely to become infected and spread infection. Policies to mitigate the spread of COVID-19 within schools must be balanced with the known harms to children, adolescents, families, and the community by keeping children at home.”
- “There is a conflict between optimal academic and social/emotional learning in schools and strict adherence to current physical distancing guidelines.”

In addition, the pediatric hospital affiliated with the University of Toronto (UT), has issued the following guidance:

- “Strict physical distancing should not be emphasized to children in the school setting as it is not practical and could cause significant psychological harm. Close interaction, such as playing and socializing, is central to child development and should not be discouraged.”
- When children are in the classroom, to the extent possible, efforts should be made to arrange the classroom furniture to leave as much space as possible between students. However, the daily school routine should not be disrupted to accommodate . . . for physical distancing.”

We know that students are not a high risk demographic if they are exposed to the coronavirus. However, about 25% of our faculty and staff are at high risk or have an immediate family member who is at high risk. It is our responsibility to provide a safe work environment for them. We suspect that a similar percentage holds for students’ families.

With these principles in mind, the following plan represents the mitigation strategies that WC will have in place beginning August 20 when students return to school. **This plan is not exhaustive and does not address every aspect of the school day. Additionally, this plan may change as we evaluate positive or negative changes to the outbreak.** While the school will be extremely vigilant on enforcement and ask for the cooperation of all students and families, there can be no guarantees that complete mitigation of risk will take place. The virus is not going away any time soon, so this is WC’s plan to continue the vital work of Christian education in an environment that recognizes the real need for precautions. This work needs to take place in a world desperate for the Gospel. While this plan is akin to Nehemiah acknowledging the need for a wall and plans for rebuilding it, we also trust as Nehemiah did that, “The God of heaven will give us success.”

Screening

All students, faculty, staff, and volunteers must self-screen, with the help of parents or a caregiver, when appropriate, before leaving home each school day for the following symptoms. A person shall not come to school under any circumstances if he/she displays any one of the following:

- A body temperature of 100* or higher any time in the previous 24 hours.
- Persistent cough
- Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing
- Nausea, vomiting or diarrhea.

- Chills
- Loss of taste or smell

Or, any two of the following:

- Body ache
- Headache
- Sore throat
- Runny nose or congestion

Any person determined by a staff person to meet these criteria during the school day will be immediately sent home or placed in a designated isolation area at school until they are taken home. It is required that parents make immediate arrangements for the pick-up of a child presenting any of these symptoms.

A student must be clear of symptoms for 24 hours and present evidence of clearance from a doctor before being permitted back to school. This is a non-negotiable aspect of being part of the WC school community. While this is a best practice at all times, it is especially vital during this coronavirus outbreak.

Physical Distancing

All classrooms will follow these guidelines:

- Following the AAP guidelines, student seating will be placed up to 6' apart but no less than 3' apart. Current class sizes allow for this in every classroom. In the vast majority of cases, especially at the lower school, this means approximately 5'-6' feet apart.
- All desks will face the same direction. Seating will not be arranged to form tables in which students face each other.
- When possible, the sharing of supplies among students will be avoided. When supplies are shared, they will be disinfected between uses.
- Six feet of distancing between adults will be maintained when at all possible. The nature of the teacher to student relationship makes absolute adherence to this impractical, and perhaps undesirable. However, teachers will use common sense when applying distancing practices between themselves and their students.
- Students will be encouraged to maintain distancing at appropriate times. However, the recommendations from the AAP and the UT indicate that this is not only impractical to maintain at all times but also undesirable since it affects important social interactions for students.
- Hallways will be one-directional.

Hand Hygiene

Regular hand washing and sanitizing are among the most effective ways to control viral spread. Students will have regular access to soap and water and alcohol-based hand sanitizers.

- All classrooms and common spaces will have hand sanitizer stations available to students and staff. Students will be encouraged to use regularly.
- Sinks will be added to seven additional lower school classrooms this fall. Those rooms without sinks will have easy access to restroom sinks.
- Students will be expected to wash their hands before and after lunch, before and after recess, and after using the restroom.
- Instruction and reminders on handwashing will be provided by staff. Signs, announcements, and other methods will be used to reinforce the importance of hand hygiene.

Face Covering: Masking/Shielding

The Ohio Department of Education strongly recommends that students in grades 3-12 wear a facial mask. However, the pediatric hospital at UT strongly recommends that students do not wear masks. And there are recommendations from others that span everything in between. The following will be implemented in accordance with our intention to balance the best possible educational environment with the safest working environment:

- **Per the state of Ohio mandate for schools, all faculty and staff will be required to wear a mask or shield during the school day, except when alone in their assigned workspace.**
- **While Lower School students are not required to wear masks, they may voluntarily wear a mask or shield at any time.** However, we recommended they wear one at arrival and dismissal times. The nature of arrival and dismissal times limit our ability to maintain distancing, especially with those outside of their classroom/grade level cohort.
- **While Upper School students are not required to wear masks, they may voluntarily wear a mask or shield at any time.** We recommend they wear a mask during arrival and dismissal time and in the hallways during class changes. On the rare occasion of a gathering in which distancing cannot be maintained, we recommend they wear a mask for the duration of that activity.
- **Students will be required to wear a mask when in a classroom with a teacher who is in a COVID-19 high risk category and are therefore in need of special protections. Those classrooms are:**
 - **Upper School Choir (Mrs. Klapheke)**
 - **7th and 8th Grade Social Studies (Mr. Colley)**
 - **10th Grade English (Mr. Walton)**

- **Any K-12 student visiting the health office will be required to wear a mask while in the health office.**
- Students who plan to wear a mask must provide their own. We recommend all students bring a fresh, clean mask with them to school in each day, even if they do not plan to wear it except in an unusual circumstance such as a visit to the health office.
- Appropriate instruction will be given to students so that no one is made to feel uncomfortable because they decided to wear or not to wear a face covering. Students will be taught to honor the decisions of other people.
- Temporary Plexiglas barriers will be placed in school offices where physical distancing may be impractical.

Lower School Recess

Play is an essential component of a child's development. We also know that the risk of viral spread is significantly lower outside. Therefore, recess will be taken with as little intervention as possible.

- We have delayed ordering of large playground equipment since these are areas to which we would have likely limited access anyway.
- Recess will be outdoors whenever the weather allows for it.
- Distancing requirements will not be enforced, although the recess supervisors will apply common sense.
- Students will be required to wash/sanitize hands before and after recess.

Chapels/Assemblies

- Lower School chapels will be divided into cohorts (Kindergarten, Grades 1-2, 3-4, and 5-6). Cohorts will have separate chapel periods and meet bi-weekly to allow for appropriate spacing.
- Upper School chapels will be divided into two cohorts (Grades 7-8 and Grades 9-12) that will meet weekly. Chapel will take place in the auditorium that allows for 6' of distancing.
- Other large group assemblies will be limited or be done through virtual technology.

Transportation

- Local school districts will dictate policies for transporting students to and from school.
- On transportation provided by WC, students will sit one per seat. Students may converse with the student on the other side of the aisle.

- The shuttle bus capacity will be limited, so advance registration may be required. More details on registration will be distributed later this summer.
- Transportation for athletic events within 25 miles of the upper school will not be provided. The athletic department will provide details on transportation alternatives.
- Buses will be cleaned and sanitized daily.

Choir/Band/Drama

Music and drama education is an essential component of WC's curriculum. We will make every effort to provide performing arts instruction and, eventually, performances. We are currently awaiting research released in July that will give the best science behind the risks and mitigation of viral spread in performing arts. As of now, we will be requiring masks in upper school choir with Mrs. Klapheke (see above) as well as limiting choir instructional time to smaller ensembles of 25 students or fewer. There may be some precautions implemented for band and drama as well, once we have access to research findings. We anticipate that band and drama will necessitate less mitigation than choir.

In order to reduce the potential for contact with shared equipment and spaces, Lower School art and music classes will be taught in each homeroom rather than in the art and music rooms.

Library and Media

School library resources will be available for checking out. The recommendation from Battelle research is that materials undergo a 72-hour quarantine prior to materials being made available again.

Pick-up and Drop-off of Students

While school doors will open for the supervision of students 30 minutes before the start of class, we are requesting that parents limit the amount of time their child arrives before the start of school as much as possible. Likewise, we are asking that all students depart the campus, except for those with after school activities, within 15 minutes of the end of the day.

One of the great community opportunities for parents is student pick-up time. It is an opportunity to see other parents and students and connect with a teacher. However, to limit the number of people in the building, until the coronavirus outbreak passes, parents will need to remain outside of the building while their child comes to them. Principals will communicate building-specific procedures.

School-Aged Child Care (SACC)/Extended Day Kindergarten (KStars)

WC will continue to provide SACC and KStars for registered families, albeit with reduced adult: child ratios. Rather than 18:1, the new state-mandated guidelines require 9:1, with each cohort in a separate space. This may require that specific programmatic changes be made, however, we anticipate them to be minor. More details will be communicated to families using SACC and KStars as they are determined.

Cleaning and Sanitizing Practices

Although the primary method of coronavirus transmission is through respiratory means, clean surfaces and environments play an important role also.

- Daily cleaning and sanitizing by the school's cleaning company will take place with safe disinfectants labeled for use against SARS-CoV-2, paying particular attention to high touch surfaces like door handles, desks, and shared materials.
- All classrooms and common spaces will have access to cleaning supplies. Classrooms will be disinfected at mid-day, end of day and throughout the day as needed.
- Interior doors will be propped open during class changeovers, and whenever else it is practical to avoid significant touching by multiple people.
- The Heating/Ventilation/Air Conditioning (HVAC) systems in each building will be set to draw in fresh outside air rather than using recycled air.
- HEPA-approved filters will be used throughout the HVAC system.
- Electro-static disinfection will be done weekly throughout each building.

Athletics

As an Ohio High School Athletic Association (OHSAA) member, WC is required to abide by the direction of the OHSAA. As of yet, The OHSAA has not given guidance on the start of interscholastic athletics for the fall season. Nevertheless, our athletic director, coaches, and trainer are prepared to implement appropriate or mandated protocols for the safety of our student-athletes, coaches, and fans.

Food Service and Cafeteria

WC will continue to provide food service to students daily. The food service staff will follow all recommended safety precautions regarding food preparation and service offered by the local health department.

Lower school students will rotate between eating in their classrooms and eating in the cafeteria. Those in the cafeteria will be seated by homeroom. Upper school students will be permitted to eat in the cafeteria, a classroom, common spaces throughout the building, or in the courtyard. Distancing will be encouraged.

Symptoms, Exposure, and Positive Test Protocol for Return to School

- A student or staff person who is sent home or stays home with symptoms related to COVID-19 must be symptom-free for 24 hours and present evidence to the school nurse of clearance from a doctor before returning to school.

- A student or staff person who tests positive for COVID-19 must do the following before returning to school:
 - Remain out of school for at least 10 calendar days from the onset of symptoms, and
 - Remain fever-free for 72 hours without the aid of fever-reducing medication, and
 - Demonstrate improved respiratory function, and
 - Receive clearance to return to school from his/her doctor.
- A student or staff person exposed to someone who has tested positive for COVID-19 must remain out of school for 14 calendar days from the date of exposure and cleared by a doctor or the health department before returning to school. Clearance does not necessarily require a visit to the doctor, but the student will need to present evidence of clearance to the school health office. “Exposure” is defined as being within 6’ of an infected person for more than 15 minutes. Under this definition an entire classroom would likely not be considered exposed to an infected person. Exposure may be limited only to those in immediate proximity of an infected person. The school nurse and principal have the authority to determine whether a student or staff person has been exposed while at school.
- WC will communicate with the Columbus Public Health Department when a student or staff person has tested positive for COVID-19 and will fully cooperate with their guidance.

Instructional Provisions for Those Out of School

All teachers will set up classrooms with access to Teams for Education from the first day of school. Assignments, lesson plans, videos, etc. will be posted to Teams throughout the year. If a student is out of school for an extended period, teachers will continue to provide instruction to that student through Teams.

References

- [State of Ohio COVID-19 Guidance for Schools](#)
- [American Academy of Pediatricians Guidance for School Re-Entry](#)
- [U. of Toronto Pediatric Hospital School Opening Recommendations](#)
- [CDC Coronavirus Fact Page](#)
- [Battelle Research on Library Materials](#)