



Resurrection Christian School

Boldly Christian • Academically Equipped • Globally Prepared

Biosecurity Proposal

**Our Plan to Return to School
August 2020**

INTRODUCTION

School closures caused by the COVID-19 pandemic are taking a toll on our children's development and social well-being, in fact, they have the potential to be generationally catastrophic when compared to summer closures or previous impacts we have experienced post 9/11 or during the Great Recession.

The abrupt transition from in-school learning to remote virtual learning that occurred on March 13, 2020, created turmoil in the education system as schools and districts scrambled to implement alternative teaching and learning models. While Resurrection Christian School was able to quickly transition to an on-line platform, we still faced challenges.

- Many of our teachers did not have the expertise and were ill-equipped for the challenge of on-line teaching and learning.
- Many of our families do not have access to the internet at home or had enough devices to be on-line concurrently.
- Students have a limited appetite for hours of computer-driven instruction.
- Parents stated they had difficulty helping their children with school work and/or creating routines at home that facilitated learning.
- One of the single most important elements to overall success was the ability for parents to stay at home. Moving forward, this of course will no longer be an option.

This pandemic is affecting every domain of our lives and, it is traumatic, children—poor children especially—will bear the burden of the attendant social and economic shocks. Every facet of a child's life is being disrupted and schools are uniquely placed to provide stability, comfort, and security during the months and years to come. That is, if we are allowed to do so. Resurrection Christian School believes children should be protected from harm and we believe that schools, with thoughtful planning and well-implemented health and safety measures, can provide an environment where the rewards of attending school outweigh the risk.

Children need school and without access to our services they are paying the price. Since closing in March 2020, students have faced a growing number of challenges:

MENTAL HEALTH

A recent survey found the COVID-19 pandemic and resulting school closures have had negative impacts on students. The survey of 11,000 K-12 students conducted by EVERFI, an education technology company, found:

- 51% of respondents said they felt more stressed
- 39% reported feeling more lonely now, and
- 38% expressed greater concern about their well-being

Other major themes were the possible or actual loss of loved ones; a hyper-awareness of health; grieving for the loss or changes in rites of passage; and on-going isolation, fear and uncertainty.¹

Historically, when a student is grieving the loss of a loved one, experiencing trauma, or dealing with life issues school and their classmates, is where they turn to for support. Schools are environments where people know what is going on with a student, can rally around them, and provide that support. This cannot and was not able to be done in an on-line format.

¹ Schaffhauser, D., Research: Students Feeling Stressed; So Are Their Teachers. *The Journal: Transforming Education Through Technology*. May 2020.

CHILD ABUSE

Recent articles in NPR (April 28, 2020)² and USA Today (May 13, 2020)³ provide a grim reminder that our most vulnerable children are not safe at home. Schools have always been one set of eyes on children and, as mandatory reporters, we are trained to look for signs of physical and sexual abuse. The coronavirus outbreak has sidelined most mandated reporters and children are paying the price. According to the article, advocates say they are responding to more physical abuse cases than ever before, and they are more severe; children who were being sexually abused once or twice a week are being abused more now; and, many experts from pediatricians, hospitals, and child advocates are saying "the worst is yet to come."

ACADEMICS

An April 2020 article in Education Week⁴, boldly stated "academically speaking, the 'COVID Slide' could be a lot worse than you think." The article, citing a report issued by the Northwest Evaluation Association, projected that in reading students may only retain about 70% of their reading progress during the closure and in math could lose half to all of their academic growth from last year. Without a strong, focused instructional initiative in the upcoming school year we may see learning gaps widened and an ongoing negative impact throughout the remainder of a student's academic career. A June 2018 study of *The Long-run Effects of Teacher Strikes: Evidence from Argentina*⁵, found that students, now in their thirties, who had lost 80 to 90 days of school due to a teacher's strike, were still experiencing a negative impact on their incomes.

Having been in on-line education at the K-12 level since 2005, we can tell you with certainty, children cannot take on a full-day's worth of content on a daily/weekly basis. In many cases, during this recent crisis, children received perhaps as much as 70% and as little as 40% of the content coverage they should have received. This loss of content and constricted instructional delivery will have long-term consequences that will ripple through Colorado's educational system for many years to come and will cost schools significantly more in terms of resources to even attempt to catch children up.

An additional area often overlooked by decision-makers is the extreme workloads being placed on teachers. They are being asked to handle the additional health regulatory requirements along with being stretched thin by reduced funding and having to teach both in on-line and face-to-face instruction. In an exclusive USA TODAY/Ipsos poll, 1 in 5 teachers say they are unlikely to go back to school if their classrooms reopen in the fall, a potential massive wave of resignations. Though most teachers report working more than usual, nearly two-thirds say they haven't been able to properly do their jobs in an educational system upended by the coronavirus. Such turnover will cause massive waves of disruption and discontinuity of instruction.

SAFETY AND CHILDCARE

As the nation pushes to reopen, parents across the country are asking "who will watch our children?" With the closure of schools, the lack of childcare is quickly emerging as one of the biggest barriers to restarting the economy and one of the biggest challenges facing our hourly wage earners. In communities such as Resurrection Christian School, the burden placed on families of finding affordable

² Kamenetz, A. *Child Sexual Abuse Reports are on the Rise Amid Lockdown Orders*. NPR, April 28, 2020.

³ Woodall, C. *As Hospitals See More Severe Child Abuse Injuries During Coronavirus, 'The Worst is Yet to Come.'* USA Today, May 13, 2020.

⁴ Sparks, S. *Academically Speaking, the 'COVID Slide' Could Be a Lot Worse Than You Think*. Education Week, April 9, 2020.

⁵ Jaume, D. and Willen, A., *The Long-run Effects of Teacher Strikes: Evidence from Argentina*. CEDLAS, Working Papers 0217, CEDLAS, Universidad Nacional de La Plata.

or alternative childcare options is exacerbating already existing inequities in the childcare system because inherently wealthier families have more options. For many of our families, school is the only choice they have. Do they risk the loss of a paycheck or do they leave their children alone and unattended? **Our state cannot successfully reopen with kids still at home.** Glib and nearly cavalier state directives of schools simply "creating blended models" of one sort or another is absolutely tone-deaf. The ONLY thing that made remote/on-line work this spring was the fact that our parents were home with their children. As *The Economist* (April 30, 2020) encouraged us to do, "consider the cost of barring children from the classroom. No amount of helicopter parenting or videoconferencing can replace real-life teachers, or the social skills acquired in the playground. Even in the countries best prepared for e-learning, such as South Korea, virtual school is less good than the real thing."

ECONOMY

In an April 30, 2020 article, *The Economist* magazine stated, "...schools have striven to remain open during wars, famines, and even storms. The extent and length of school closures now happening in the rich world are unprecedented. The costs are horrifying. Most immediately, having to take care of children limits the productivity of parents. But in the long run that will be dwarfed by the amount of lost learning. Those costs will fall most heavily on those children who are most in need of education. Without interventions the effects could last a lifetime."⁶

RE-OPENING RESURRECTION CHRISTIAN SCHOOL IN AUGUST 2020

Larimer County has been well below the various daily/weekly positive-case triggers and has significant capacity in our hospitals. We were initially and understandably given the various health orders with the idea of slowing the spread. In short, this was so our hospitals could contain the outbreak and also not put a further drag on PPE consumption. We have not only "flattened the curve." Further, in a recent comment by Tom Gonzales in our June 10 weekly school head call, we have "bent the curve downward." In re-opening Resurrection Christian School, we acknowledge that bringing together large numbers of individuals may result in some COVID-19 cases, however with clear and actionable guidance for safe operations we will be able to minimize the risk to students, staff, and the public. According to the World Health Organization in a March 2020 report, *maintaining safe school operations or reopening schools after a closure requires many considerations but, if done well, can promote public health.*⁷

In a recent article published in *The Lancet Child & Adolescent Health*, Professor Russell Viner (University College London Great Ormond Street Institute of Child Health and President of the Royal College of Pediatrics and Child Health) said, "we know from previous studies that school closures are likely to have the greatest effect if the virus has low transmissibility and attack rates are higher in children. This is the opposite of COVID-19." The article goes on to say **school closures do not appear** to have a significant effect on the spread of infections such as COVID-19, suggesting that they may prevent only 2-4 percent of deaths (which is less than the impact of other social distancing interventions) but will be crucial to how we restart society.⁸

⁶ The Economist. *When Easing Lockdowns, Governments Should Open Schools First*. April 30, 2020.

⁷ *Guidance for COVID-19 Prevention and Control in Schools, March 2020. Inter-Agency Standing Committee (UNICEF, WHO, IFRC)*

⁸ Viner, R. and Ward, J. *School Closure and Management Practices During Coronavirus Outbreaks including COVID-19: A Rapid Systemic Review*. The Lancet, Vol. 4, Issue 5, April 2020.

Our Position

Without a clear consensus on the role of youth in the transmission of COVID-19, a lack of clarity on COVID-19's future (small outbreaks, a monster wave, or a persistent crisis), an undetermined date for a viable vaccine, and, the realization that if we do not get kids actively engaged in the education and socialization process of school we could be condemning them to a life of on-going economic struggles, we have no other option but to act now. We are a small school of about 1200 students. Our campus is on one site and physically laid out in a way that is easy to contain and control. We do not have multiple, sprawling campuses like larger, public schools. We do not believe a "one size fits all" approach to school health mandates is appropriate. We believe we must take the information we have at hand, implement safety and social precautions to the best of our ability, **but we must get students back in school—all students, every day, for a full-school year.**

For schools, this no different than our planning for an active shooter, a fire, or other crisis event. Planning for re-opening schools takes a thoughtful, multi-disciplinary approach. Among our various security threats, **biosecurity** is just the latest challenge schools are asked to confront as we try to strike a balance between security and student engagement.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES IN REOPENING OUR SCHOOL

The overriding principles in our reopening plan are:

- The safety and wellbeing of students, staff, and community continues to be a priority.
- To minimize the risk that someone becomes infected in the first place with rapid, comprehensive and aggressive quarantining.
- Consistent and immediate communication with county health officials.
- Maximize the ability for contact tracing by ensuring we assist the county and help identify and contact anyone who has been in close contact with individuals who have been infected. To this end, and to assist in partnering with the county, RCS has invested nearly \$10,000 in new electronic health records software (Magnus). This will enable us to better record daily health and safety issues and student interactions. As a result we will be greatly enhancing the ability to conduct contact tracing among other improved health and safety functions.
- That to the extent practicable, in-person learning will provide social distancing and reduced group size/capacity loads in each classroom and/or building.
- To open school as close to "normal" as possible to provide familiarity and stability for our students.

KEY IMPLEMENTATIONS AS WE OPEN IN FALL 2020

The actions below outline how we are redesigning our organization to successfully reopen our schools in fall 2020. Our strategic goal is to provide in-building, **five-day a week instruction for every student**, in a structure that is as close to "normal" as can be achieved.

ADAPT SCHOOL POLICIES WHERE APPROPRIATE

- Review and revise attendance policies to encourage students and staff to stay home when sick or caring for sick family members.

- Require all families who participate with our in-person schooling to sign a contract indicating they understand health and safety expectations under COVID-19 will be amplified and that incompliance with the District's health orders may affect their attendance at RCS.
- Place on hiatus recognition such as perfect attendance and/or other incentives to come to school.
- Have flexible calendar policies and on-line instructional capabilities to allow for quick and smooth transitions between in-person and remote learning in case of temporary school closures.

SICK STUDENTS AND STAFF SHOULD NOT COME TO SCHOOL

- All students and staff will go through a mandatory health screening before entering school. This will include:
 - In-person temperature check.
 - Response to symptom related questions.
 - Questions related to contact with COVID-19 individuals.
- Students exhibiting any symptoms while at school will be quarantined on-site until parents are able to remove the child from school.
- An informational campaign, targeting parents, on the symptoms to look for in their children and/or the contact related concerns will be on-going throughout the year.
- Active monitoring of school attendance to monitor trends in symptoms/reasons for absence(s).

TARGETED HEALTH PRECAUTIONS

- No family members will be allowed past entry.
- Students will be grouped in cohorts with teachers going to the student when possible and/or practicable.
- Social distancing will be observed. As each building and classroom is unique in terms of space and infrastructure, social distancing will be flexible, but will be implemented to the fullest practicable level.
- Regular hand washing will be required and encouraged with periodic campus-wide signage and trainings.

DEVELOP INFORMATION-SHARING SYSTEMS

- Biosecurity will be a function subsumed by Health & Safety Management Team.
- This team will review absenteeism patterns looking for student/staff absenteeism due to respiratory illness.
- Members of the team will be trained in contact tracing to assist us in identifying students, families, or schools of concern.
- Communication protocols with Larimer County Health Department will be developed and implemented.

SAFE LEARNING SPACES

To the extent possible, we will minimize the number of students and staff each individual interacts with during the course of the school day.

- Students shall not change from one group to another (as practicable).
- Where practicable, groups shall be in a separate room/programming area and shall not mix with each other.
- Staff shall remain solely with one group of children throughout the course of the day (as practicable).
- If children rotate from one space to another, the room & equipment will need to be cleaned and sanitized prior to having another group.

- Reduce the number of shared items. Students will be expected to have their own school supplies and these will be kept individually in their desk, backpack, cubby or other container.
- Adequate supplies to minimize sharing of high touch materials will be provided (i.e., art supplies, science equipment, etc.). Supplies and equipment will be used by one group of students at a time and then will be cleaned and disinfected between uses.
- To the extent possible, social distancing will be observed.
- Hand sanitizer stations will be installed in classrooms and commons areas.
- Every classroom will have their own temporal thermometer.
- Additional cleaning and decontamination will occur throughout the facility on a consistent basis.

ATHLETICS AND OTHER POTENTIALLY HIGH-RISK ACTIVITIES SPORTS

The Colorado High School Activities Association (CHSAA) has created a Resocialization Task Force to examine when, and how, to resume sports and activities. Among the topics to be examined, the Task Force will address:

- What safety measures will need to be in place to resume specific and/or all activities?
- Should CHSAA consider offering some activities and athletics if federal, state, medical and safety guidelines can be met at the local and Association level?
- Should CHSAA consider adjusting some activities and athletics to be conducted earlier or later than their traditional season?
- The district will follow all guidelines provided by the Colorado High School Activities Association regarding team sports and activities.

CHOIR

- All students will have their temperature checked prior to the start of each class (an additional screening beyond the start of school day screening).
- Social distancing will be observed as much as practicable.
- No singing in circles and no choreography (activity increases emissions).
- No printed music. No sharing of music. Project music on screens.
- Limit the amount of time actual singing takes place in the classroom. Encourage students to video themselves singing and use class time for review and/or individual instruction.

PLAYGROUNDS

- Students will be kept in cohort groups and assigned designated areas on the playground and/or fields.
- Encourage students to participate in touch-free activities such as jumping rope, hula hoops, hopscotch, kicking a soccer ball (encourage footwork only), running and other similar activities.
- Limited use of playground equipment, with frequent sanitization. As more information is made available on the effects of sunlight on COVID-19 and/or the survivability of the virus on surfaces, access to equipment may be relaxed.

MEASURES TO PREVENT CROWDS FROM GATHERING

- School meals (Breakfast/Lunch) will be "grab-and-go" and students will eat in their assigned classroom, in cohorts, but separated from other cohorts or in supervised groups outdoors when the weather permits.
- Stagger bell schedules and redirect traffic patterns to minimize the number of students in hallways at any one time.
- Recess will be staggered for different groups and "homeroom" groups will be divided into smaller groups and assigned to specific areas of the playground (i.e., five students to one area).

- As many school events as possible such as assemblies, plays, concerts, back-to-school nights, etc. will be placed on hiatus or will be redesigned for an on-line platform or other format until further notice.
- Limits will be placed on non-essential visitors and their access to our building.

TRANSPORTATION

- Parents will self-transport their children to school.
- Social distancing will be implemented where practicable.
- Students and drivers will wear face masks.
- Notation will be made of what students were on a particular bus in order to allow for contact tracking in the event of exposure to COVID-19.
- Additional cleaning and decontamination of school buses after each run.

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

Resurrection Christian School's Biosecurity Plan presented in response to the COVID-19 pandemic provides a level of security that will afford a safe learning environment for our students. The plan is based on the premise that there are things a rational organization can do to limit the havoc wrought by the virus and that we need to do as many of them as we can while still preserving a level of social services that provides students with future opportunities, supports the economy, and contributes to the health and well-being of our society in general. As we reopen our school; we will do so by establishing public trust, managing fear and perceptions of risk, and addressing community needs are key to a successful and effective crisis response.

In summary our plan will:

- Maximize the separation of cohorts to allow for early identification and isolation of students exposed to, or exhibiting symptoms of, COVID-19.
- Institute contact tracking protocols to catch exposure early and reduce the risk of a school wide exposure. Contact tracking will also allow us to identify siblings in other schools, helping to reduce the risk of a district-wide outbreak.
- Continue social distancing, to the extent practicable, as we expand the number of days, hours, and students in our schools throughout the year.
- Require PPE in various applications and situations and personal hygiene regimens for students and staff.
- Reduce the number of non-essential individuals in our schools.
- Institute a cleaning regime that is frequent, targeted, and of a scope sufficient to reduce the on-going transmission of the virus.
- Entail creativity and flexibility in scheduling to stagger recess, lunchtime, and passing periods to reduce "crowd" size and keep students separated.
- Improve communication between the district and local/state health officials.

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