



2020-21 Back-to-School Plan

Rev. 08/19/2020

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. The primary goals of the revised plan remain twofold: Protect the health of our community and protect the ability to conduct instruction in person and on campus. We believe that both of these aspects are extremely important to the well-being and development of our students and those we serve. This practice aligns with the American Academy of Pediatrics, the Centers for Disease Control, and other school and medical organizations that call for schools to prioritize students being physically present on campus. This plan's protocol is designed to provide an environment that limits conditions that could force moving to online instruction.

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.** Because of the fluidity of the circumstances, the school may determine between now and August 20 that there is a need to delay the start of the school year. If this is necessary, we will give families as much advance notice as possible. Because we would be losing instructional days at the beginning of the school calendar, we would need to make adjustments to the calendar later in the year.

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 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. This is WC’s plan to continue the vital work of Christian education in an environment that recognizes the real need for precautions. Our hope is to remove these accommodations as soon as we can prudently do so. 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.”

Calendar

WC will begin school on Thursday, August 20. August 20 and August 21 will be a soft opening, with half of the students attending the 20th and the other half on the 21st. These days will be used for student orientation to the COVID protocol and give faculty an opportunity to practice protocol implementation with a smaller group. All students will begin full-time on campus on Monday, August 24. Each building principal will communicate which students will attend each day for the soft opening on the 20th and 21st.

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
- 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 who is sent home sick from school 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 4'-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, whenever possible.

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 following policies will be implemented regarding face coverings for the school community:

- Per the state of Ohio mandate for schools, all faculty and staff will be required to wear a mask while inside and on campus, except when alone in their assigned workspace. A shield may not be used in place of a mask.
- Per state of Ohio mandate for schools, all K-12 students will be required to wear a mask while inside on campus. A shield may not be used in place of a mask
- Masks must cover the mouth and nose and fit snugly on the face.
- Exceptions to the mask requirement are allowable for the following:

- ⊖ Students with health conditions that would prohibit safely wearing either a mask or a shield, provided the student presents written confirmation from his/her doctor to the school nurse that neither a mask or shield may be safely worn by the student.
 - ⊖ Students who claim a religious exemption under the Ohio Executive Order may be exempt from wearing a mask, but not from wearing a shield.
 - ⊖ Students actively engaged in exercise while in PE class in which 6' of spacing can be maintained or athletic practice.
 - ⊖ Students engaged in playing a musical instrument that requires the use of the mouth.
 - When a student is seated and actively eating or drinking.
- All K-12 students will be required to wear a mask while visiting the health office, even those with exemptions.
- Students shall provide their own clean mask or shield each day. We emphasize the importance of using a clean mask or shield during the school day. Regular cleaning and disinfecting of reusable items is critical to reducing the potential spread of the virus.
- Students will be given opportunities during the day to have “mask breaks” by either going outside or by receiving permission from a staff member to momentarily remove the mask. Those opportunities will be judiciously granted at the discretion of a staff member.
- This requirement may be modified or relaxed if, after review of public health and professional medical guidance, trends in COVID cases, state input and other factors, it is determined that it is safe to do so.

Travel Advisories

Students or staff who return from travel to one of the states listed on state’s [Travel Advisory List](#) **prior to the first day of school will be recommended** for self-quarantine for 14 days. While considering the recommendation, the family should consider the level of potential exposure on their trip as well as monitor for any symptoms upon return. Those who return from a trip to an advised state **after the first day of school will be required** to remain out of school for 14 days upon return.

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.

- Facial coverings significantly reduce the amount of aerosol and the potential for viral spread. The 6th grade choir in the Lower School will be required to wear a mask or shield during choir periods.
- The number of students allowed in a choir rehearsal for any given period is capped at 25 to allow for proper spacing between students. Emphasis will be placed on performing in smaller ensembles rather than in larger combined choirs.
- More time will be spent on music theory and other activities that do not produce high levels of aerosols.

- Band instruments will be covered with protective bell coverings to reduce aerosol distribution.
- Instruments will be spaced to limit that exposure students will have from instruments that produce more aerosols.
- Additional air purifiers will be provided for music rooms.

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.

Online Learning

WC will close on-campus learning and move to online learning for all its students if it determines that it is necessary to protect the health of our community. The school will continuously monitor feedback from the state of Ohio and the county advisory system, local COVID case rates, public health officials and other medical professionals, and our own campus experiences. We do not believe this move is in the best interest of the education and development of our students, so we request our community's cooperation with avoiding higher risk activities that could aid the spread of the virus to the extent that it threatens our ability to continue on-campus schooling.

If on-campus learning is closed and we move online for all students, we will provide all Lower School students with iPads and all Upper School students with Chromebooks to take home for daily synchronous instruction online with their teacher. The Upper School will follow a to-be-determined modified schedule for the day, and Lower School teachers will schedule online instructional times with their students daily as well. Elective, non-core, or courses not required for graduation will likely pause during short closures and contain limited coursework during any longer closure. This is not a statement of the value of those courses. In fact, we are committed to all areas of the curriculum and every discipline we teach. But it is a recognition time will necessarily need to be committed to core coursework.

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.

Visitors and Volunteers

Access to the building during the school day for visitors (including parents) and volunteers will be very limited and be required to wear face covering.

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. All sports are able to practice beginning August 1, with contact sports currently prohibited from scrimmages or competitions with other schools.

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

These rules are based upon current CDC guidance and are subject to change with CDC's frequent updating. See the included flowchart for a visual representation.

- WC students or staff who test positive for coronavirus must immediately notify the 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. If a student or staff member tests positive, we will notify the affected members of the school community. HIPAA privacy rules prevent us from identifying that person. However, if the guidance we receive from the health department causes us to identify any students or staff members as having been exposed, we will contact those individuals directly and notify them that they must remain out of school for 14 days from the day of the most recent exposure. 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 date of the test, and
 - Remain fever-free for 24 hours without the aid of fever-reducing medication, and
 - Remain free of all major symptoms for 24 hours.
- A student or staff person determined to have been on close contact with someone who has tested positive for COVID-19 must remain out of school for 14 calendar days from the date of exposure. The person may return after 14 days if he/she remains symptom-free. If symptoms develop, he/she must see a doctor and present clearance from the doctor before returning to school. Columbus Public Health will provide direction in determining who has been exposed to a positive case.
- A student or staff person who is sent home from school 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.

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 and Resources

- [State of Ohio COVID-19 Guidance for Schools](#)
- [American Academy of Pediatrics Guidance for School Re-Entry](#)
- [U. of Toronto Pediatric Hospital School Opening Recommendations](#)
- [CDC Coronavirus Fact Page](#)
- [Battelle Research on Library Materials](#)
- [U. of Colorado Study on Performing Arts](#)
- [JAMA Article on the Efficacy of Shields](#)