



Maternity of Mary
Saint Andrew

CATHOLIC SCHOOL

**PANDEMIC PREPAREDNESS
AND READINESS PLAN**

2021-2022 ACADEMIC YEAR

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INTRODUCTION

Beginning in March 2020, and continuing through the 2020-21 school year, our deep concern about the risks of COVID-19 and love of neighbor, along with our responsibility to adhere to the regulations issued through the legitimate authority of the State, prompted Catholic schools to impose unprecedented restrictions and requirements on teachers, students, and families. We did this in solidarity with the broader community in order to give the healthcare system an opportunity to prepare, to give the scientific community an opportunity to gain knowledge, and to give those who were most vulnerable an opportunity to receive a safe and effective vaccine.

The last eighteen months of educating during the global COVID-19 pandemic have taught us a lot about the implications of these restrictions and requirements. While some disease mitigation strategies have had minimal effect on children, we have also become much more aware of the disproportionately negative effects associated with others. Many of these mitigation strategies place a great burden on the well-being of children and families. Catholic schools of the Archdiocese have shown that we are willing to impose these burdens, and we remain willing to impose them when circumstances warrant.

Thankfully the circumstances surrounding the start of the upcoming year are very different from those we faced a year ago. As Catholic school educators who look broadly at all goods, we are confident that when we take all factors into consideration, the following Pandemic Preparedness and Readiness Plan Template for Catholic Schools in the Archdiocese prudently and proportionately applies public health strategies that will create the best environment for students to flourish physically, mentally, emotionally, academically, and spiritually in Catholic schools during the upcoming academic year as well as slow the spread of COVID-19. Guided by scientific findings, we are taking a broad multilayered strategic approach to disease mitigation rather than focusing on single strategies.

We continue to monitor the situation closely and will provide updates as needed. With the information that is currently available, including our successful experience offering in-person learning throughout the 2020-21 school year, Catholic schools in the Archdiocese will continue to responsibly plan and take the action steps outlined in the PPRP to lower the risk of COVID-19 transmission. Further guidance from the State and legal mandates for nonpublic schools in Minnesota will be evaluated on an as-needed basis through the academic year.

We pray for all our families and ask for the prayers of the entire Catholic school community as we all seek the wisdom and courage to continue the essential work for the sake of one of our noblest endeavors—the education of our children.

Pandemic Preparedness and Readiness

Promoting Behaviors That Reduce the Spread of Disease

- a) Students and employees are required to stay home when they are sick. Schools must promptly send children and employees home when they display symptoms of COVID-19 illness.

- b) Schools will articulate expectations for student health checks by parents at home before sending children to school. Parents will be reminded to keep sick children home.

- c) Schools will teach and reinforce proper handwashing hygiene and respiratory etiquette.

- d) In determining when students may return to school after an illness, MMSA will follow their standard illness exclusion policy (e.g. fever-free for 24 hours without fever-reducing medication, and no vomiting in the last 24 hours) unless a student has a lab-confirmed case of COVID-19. Students with lab-confirmed cases of COVID-19 are allowed to return to school when ***ALL*** of the following are true (Minnesota Department of Health, 2021):
 - 1. They feel better. Their cough, shortness of breath, or other symptoms have substantially improved.

 - 2. It has been at least 10 days since they first felt sick or tested positive.

 - 3. They have had no fever for at least 24 hours, without using medicine that lowers fevers.

- e) A similar illness-exclusion policy will be made for employees.

- f) Responsive to our care for the whole child, MMSA will provide additional assistance to students who have experienced prolonged absences due to illness through the Pandemic.

Maintaining Healthy Facilities

- g) MMSA will evaluate the operational capacity of ventilation systems and increase and maintain ventilation through the building.

- h) MMSA will continue to clean and disinfect as we did during the 2020-21 school year.

- i) MMSA will provide adequate supplies for implementing its cleaning and disinfecting plan.
- j) MMSA will ensure safe and correct use and storage of cleaning and disinfecting products, including always storing products securely away from children and using products that meet EPA disinfecting criteria.

Maintaining Healthy Operations

- k) Minnesota Rule 4605.7070 requires any person in charge of any institution, school, child care facility, or camp to report cases of COVID-19 to the Minnesota Department of Health. (MDH) following procedures provided by MDH.
- l) MMSA will prudently evaluate their plan for in-person group events, gatherings, and meetings during the school day with respect to the risk of spreading COVID-19.
- m) All visitors and vendors to MMSA will follow all school-defined safety and personal hygiene procedures. Until the Pandemic has run its course, visits of volunteers, visitors, and vendors during the pandemic should be kept to the essential activities.
- n) Schools will train all employees on the requirements of this PPRP.
- o) MMSA will continue to communicate to students, families, and employees all expectations related to this PPRP.
- p) MMSA will monitor compliance with these PPRP requirements in a practicable manner to help ensure adherence among students.
- q) MMSA Masses and other liturgical services must follow the Archdiocesan protocols published by the Office of Worship which can be obtained from the pastor, chaplain, or priest-celebrant.

2. The Archdiocese makes the following recommendations to Catholic schools based on our shared wisdom of educating during the COVID-19 pandemic, the responsibility of parents as primary educators of their children, and the requirements of Minnesota Statutes:

Vaccines: COVID-19 Vaccines are not currently required at MMSA. MMSA will inform our families of the availability of the COVID-19 vaccine and provide support for those families who desire to receive a vaccination.

COVID-19 Testing: MMSA will inform families in writing of the availability of COVID-19 testing and the locations where testing is available and provide support for those families who desire to get tested.

Face Coverings: The State's legal mandate requiring face coverings in public and nonpublic schools expired at the end of the 2020-2021 school year. MMSA will not require students or vaccinated employees to wear face coverings. Parents and guardians are well-positioned to determine if their child should wear a face covering while outside of the home and out in the community. No student will be prevented from wearing a face covering. Catholic schools will work to reduce any stigmatization associated with the decision to wear or not wear a face covering. Based on local circumstances, the pastor, canonical administrator, or competent board may institute a policy that further addresses this issue.

At this time, all people are required by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) order to wear face coverings while in public transportation hubs and on all public transportation conveyances (airplanes, public buses, etc.), including school buses (both public and private).

Physical Distancing: Schools should promote public health recommendations for physical distancing provided they do not: 1) disproportionately impact child development or the educational goals of the school or 2) limit the school's ability to offer in-person learning to all of its students.

Contact Tracing: The responsibility for contact tracing lies with trained professionals at the Minnesota Department of Health. MMSA will assist MDH by providing relevant information when requested.

Quarantine: Minnesota Department of Health no longer requires school leaders to quarantine individuals, entire classrooms, or groups of students because of potential exposure to COVID. MMSA will:

1. Positive case reported. Positive person quarantined for 10 days. Letter sent to the class to notify them. Classroom parents are asked to watch for symptoms and consider masking their child. Case reported to the state and Archdiocese.
2. If another person in the class tests positive within the 10-day quarantine period and is contact traced to the initial exposure, we will ask that all students and teachers mask for a period of 14 days and sanitize the classroom as an additional mitigation procedure.

3. The entire class might be asked to quarantine if it begins to appear that there had been an outbreak in the class. This will be based on a percentage of the class, our ability to trace the exposure, and other factors. The decision will be made in collaboration with the nurse, pastor, and leadership team.
4. Students who have a family member test positive for COVID are still being asked to stay home for 10 days to protect the rest of the students. This is because it is in their home and therefore much more likely to be transferred to them.
5. Supporting students in quarantine will look a bit different this year. This support will vary greatly by age. Generally, students will be provided packets to work on at home treating a quarantine like an extended absence. We will maintain contactless pick-up in the front entry.

Closing Catholic School Buildings: The decision to temporarily close a Catholic school building due to concerns about the spread of an infectious disease will be made on the advice of competent public health authorities. MMSA will promptly notify the Archdiocesan Office for the Mission of Catholic Education of the decision to close a Catholic school building.

Change in Learning Models: Schools should minimize changes to the in-person learning model for individual students, classrooms, and schools. MMSA will only utilize the distance learning model when they have been advised by a competent public health authority to temporarily close a school building or classroom due to concerns about the spread of an infectious disease.

Communication to Parents Regarding Exposure to Infectious Disease: When students are potentially exposed to any infectious disease (including but not limited to COVID-19) at school, school leaders will notify parents following their infectious disease notification policy. At a minimum, MMSA will provide families with the communicable disease factsheet available from the Infectious Diseases in Childcare Settings and Schools Manual.