COVID-19 Re-Opening Plans - Frequently Asked Questions & Answers

At Annunciation, we believe that our Christ-Centered EL Education learning community is stronger when we are together than apart. We also believe in science and believe that our decisions should be based on the best and most current research available. We are therefore committed to providing our students with a quality education while upholding health guidelines that will strive to keep everyone in our building safe and healthy.

Below are responses to your Frequently Asked Questions based on the survey we sent to our Annunciation Catholic School community on July 23, 2020. We’ve taken into account the recommendations and requirements from the Office of Catholic Schools, Centura Health, State of Colorado Department of Health Fall Reopening Guidance, and Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. http://www.cde.state.co.us/communications/20200720reopeningguidance

Our Leadership Team is working on developing a COVID-19 Reopening Handbook to be sent out before the opening of school, detailing all the protocols and guidelines that will be in place to keep our students, families, and teachers safe. In the meantime, we wanted to provide you with as many answers to your questions as possible. Know that the responses to these questions are based on the information we currently have, as you know the response to the Coronavirus Pandemic continues to change. We are committed to change and adjust as the times do.

Q: Will school be five days a week or in shifts?
A: All Archdiocesan schools will begin the year with unrestricted In-School Learning five days a week. The Office of Catholic Schools has developed a guideline for operational and health models for all Archdiocesan Schools. For a complete explanation and visual of the models click on the Annunciation website link. http://www.annunciationk8.org/covid-19-update.html

Q: How will the students be separated?
A: Students will be divided into Cohorts. The majority of the day students will be in their individual classrooms, but at lunch and recess students will be in what are considered cohorts. Cohorts are combined grade levels grouped together in order to minimize exposure and assist in contact tracing should a student get Covid-19. Even within cohorts, students will be expected to follow social distancing protocols.

The Cohorts for the coming school year will be: Kindergarten & Third Grade, First Grade & Second Grade, Fourth Grade & Fifth Grade, Middle School (6th, 7th, & 8th)
Q: Will Annunciation be offering an online option if I don’t feel comfortable sending my children back to school in the fall?
A: As a school, we are completely committed to creating a safe school environment for your children which will allow them to learn and stay healthy. However, we understand that some families might not feel comfortable sending their students back to school for safety reasons and/or due to health concerns. Thus, The Office of Catholic Schools has created a distance-learning option for students in kindergarten through 8th grade. St. Isidore Catholic Curriculum will be managed by the Office of Catholic Schools and is available for any family who may not want to send their children to in-school learning this upcoming school year. Please note that your children will still be an Annunciation student, and tuition payable to Annunciation. The link to register and with more information is as follows: https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/SICC-Registration-2021SY

Q: Will the school be taking daily temperature checks?
A: Yes, everyone who enters the building will have their temperature checked and documented. We are asking the parents to conduct a daily health screening prior to bringing a student to school each day, which will be included in the COVID-19 handbook. When teachers and students arrive, we will have staff members who record the daily temperature. If a student’s temperature is 100 degrees or above, the student will have to immediately leave campus and may not return without a doctor’s approval.

Q: Will parents be able to walk their children into their classrooms in the morning?
A: No, we are asking parents to remain in their car as a safety measure in order to minimize the number of people in the building.

Q: Will parents have to come into the building to sign in Headstart students?
A: No, Headstart will have teachers outside to take temperature and sign students into the building.

Q: What will the morning car line look like?
A: We will have staff out helping direct traffic in the morning. We are asking parents not to leave their car and to not pull away until your child has been given an all-clear for their temperature reading. In order to keep the car line moving, we will ask that you follow the staff’s directives and keep moving forward in line until the all-clear has been given for you to leave.

Q: What will the procedure be to notify the community if a student or teacher test positive?
A: We are very limited to information we can share due to the regulations from the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996 (Hipaa) and The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA). Based on Appendix B from the Office of Catholic Schools Reopening
School plan: If a confirmed case of COVID-19 is in the school community, school leaders are to work directly with state and local health officials, and the Office of Catholic Schools to determine the most appropriate next steps. Click link for guidance from Colorado Department of Health and Environment. case and outbreak guidance.

Q: Will students be required to wear Masks?
A: There is sufficient evidence that mask-wearing is effective in limiting the spread of the virus, especially when people must come into close contact with one another. While there may be moments where prudently one may determine masking is not necessary, it is highly recommended that schools promote a culture of mask wearing especially during certain moments or situations such when students will be in close contact with one another over an extended period of time, and you cannot keep 3-6ft of distance. At Annunciation Catholic School We will follow all state and health mandates regarding masks. As Christ-Centered Catholic EL community, our school will strive to be a culture of mask wearers, encouraging every student to wear a mask. In doing so, we show our love and respect for those in our school who have asthma, our elders, and for the most vulnerable.

Q: Is there any time during the day that students will not be required to wear masks?
A: Students will be encouraged to wear their masks during their classes. There will be designated mask breaks throughout the day where the children will be allowed to take their masks off in a safe, socially distanced environment. If it is impossible to maintain 3 ft distance, masks are musts.

Q: Will teachers, staff and other adults in the building be required to wear masks?
A: Yes, visitors 10 years or older who enter our building are expected to wear masks and/or face shields when in contact with others.

Q: Will we have to keep 6 ft. of distance?
A: As the sources listed above say, schools should do their best to maintain 6 ft from the center of a chair to the center of another chair, at a minimum schools should strive to keep 3 feet distance again from center of chair to another chair in addition to other control measures such desk shields. If at least 3 feet distance cannot be maintained, masks must be worn. In the handbook we are currently developing, we will lay out our plans for day to day operations to ensure that we are meeting Social Distancing Guidelines.

Q: Will the restrooms have a limited number of children/adults at once.
A: Based on recommendations from the above agencies it is recommended that “The Capacity in the restroom equals the number of sinks. Teachers will build in bathroom breaks for students to help monitor capacity.”
Q: Will the school be cleaned daily?  
A: We have a professional cleaning company that has been and will continue to be cleaning and disinfecting the school nightly. We have met with the company and have created a list of cleaning and disinfecting procedures that must be done daily.

Q: What will the school be doing to monitor cleanliness of the bathrooms, cafeteria and other high touch areas during the school day?  
A: Annunciation Catholic School will be hiring personnel to help keep up with the required cleaning protocols during the day. If interested in inquiring about this position, please contact Mrs. Roberts at 303-295-2515x20.

Q: Will the students be playing and eating with students outside of their classroom?  
A: Lunch and recess will occur in Cohorts. We are building schedules to limit the number of students in the cafeteria and recess time.

Q: Will students be interacting with other students in the building?  
A: Classes will be in Cohorts (see question above). Keeping students in the cohorts will be critical because if someone does contract the virus, we can more easily determine who may have come into contact with them based on their cohort. Cohorts will be used in order to minimize the chances of an outbreak throughout the school. Students will stay in their classrooms during the day and have limited contact with students in other cohorts. Middle school students will stay in one classroom for the day rather than switching from class to class. Specials teachers (aside from PE) will travel to each individual classroom for classes to minimize the movement of children throughout the building. All of this is done to ensure that students are interacting with as few people and as few surfaces as possible.

Q: Will the students still participate in CREW?  
A: Yes, CREW is essential to our school culture. Students in grades K-5 will have CREW with their classroom teacher. The leadership team along with the Middle School teachers are developing a plan for Middle School Crew so we can maintain the fidelity of CREW for our students and teachers. Weather permitting, teachers will hold Crew outside.

Q: Will students have specials? (Art, Music, PE)  
A: Specials classes (P.E., Art and Music) will occur in each student’s own classroom to limit movement in the building. Weather permitting, P.E. will be held outside.

Q: Will the students be attending weekly Mass?  
A: As a Christ-centered Catholic community, attending mass is essential in order for our students to continue to grow in their faith. Fr. Charles would like to have weekly mass, but in individual classrooms with the students.
Q: What will students need to return to school?
A: Lockers will not be used during the pandemic in order to minimize the spread of germs at school and at home. Middle School students will be allowed to bring a backpack that will stay at school at all times. We ask that you bring school supplies on assessment day so the teacher can prepare the supplies for the students. These supplies will be kept at your student’s desk at all times.

Q: Will the school’s start and end times remain the same?
A: Students may begin to arrive as early as 7:30. They will have their temperature taken and then go directly to their classroom or Middle School Crew classrooms where breakfast will be served. We will have a staggered dismissal at the end of the day. In the handbook we are currently developing, arrival and dismissal protocols will be explained in more detail. More details to come on what this will look like.

Q: Is there an issue with Air Conditioning like in some DPS school?
A: The Archdiocese of Denver is consulting with the State of Colorado in regard to older buildings that do not have Hvac systems. At the time of this writing, we do not have a clear answer. We do know that windows will be open for fresh air circulation.

Q: Will there be before school programs?
A: Yes, we will have Before School opening at 6:30 am. Parents will need to sign their students in per state guidelines and not leave until student temperatures have been taken.

Q: Will the students be separated in the Afterschool Program?
A: At this time, school administration is working with The Colorado Department of Human Services Child Care Department in order to be in compliance with COVID-19 regulations for afterschool programs and proper social distancing guidelines.

Q: Will students still be able to go to St. Charles after school?
A: Denver Park and Recreation Centers have not reopened. Once they reopen we will be working with St. Charles as an option for our students and parents.

Q: Will breakfast and lunch be served in the classroom?
A: Breakfast will be served in the classroom. At this time, we are planning on lunch being served in the cafeteria. We are building a schedule so that the students will be eating with the other students in their cohort. Plexiglass will be installed at each table in the cafeteria to allow for safer eating, while still allowing students to sit across from each other at a table with plexiglass in between. Students will be spread out throughout the cafeteria to maintain social distancing.
Q: What happens if parents or students refuse to follow safety guidelines?
A: The School administration will have an individual meeting with parents and students. If after that meeting behaviors do not change the school administration, in consultation with Pastor and Superintendent, will ask the family to withdraw from Annunciation Catholic School based on Archdiocesan Policy numbers 2630 and 2660 Student Withdrawal on Grounds of Parental or Student Behavior: B) Refusal to adhere to Archdiocesan or local policies and regulations.

Q: Is there a plan in place if we have to go distance learning because of a Stay At Home order again by the county or state?
A: The teachers will be given time during our planning week together to meet in grade level teams to collectively come up with plans that are grade level appropriate if in the evident we have to revert back to Distance learning.