

NEW COVENANT SCHOOLS

COVID-19 MITIGATIONS MESSAGE

AUGUST 9, 2021

A Word About Governor Northam's Press Conference

At his most recent press conference last week, the Governor refrained from placing the Commonwealth under another State of Emergency. Rather, he urged schools to follow the CDC guidance. The Governor left the impression that following the CDC guidance was the law of Virginia, citing an act of the legislature to open public schools for 5-days-a-week in-person instruction. The sponsor of this bill, and others, strongly disagreed. Moreover, the Governor did not distinguish between public and private schools, stating that the law covered "all schools" in the Commonwealth. This is inaccurate. As of last week, nothing has changed regarding local

option control of COVID mitigations for private schools. New Covenant is not required to file a re-opening plan with the Commonwealth (which was done last year), and is free to apply mitigations consistent with our community, needs, and purposes. What follows, therefore, is an overview of our procedures. **Please be aware that these are also subject to change as circumstances may require.** The following guidelines have been established with guidance from the Virginia Department of Health. Our goal is to maintain quality in-person instruction while mitigating the risk of COVID-19 within our school community.

The following guidelines have been established with guidance from the Virginia Department of Health. Our goal is to maintain in-person instruction while mitigating the risk of COVID-19 spread within our school community.



PREVENTION: VACCINES AND FACE COVERINGS

First and foremost, we will focus on prevention. COVID-19 vaccines, although not required, are currently available to adults and children twelve and older, and are projected to become available to children aged 2-11 during the course of the 21-22 school year. New Covenant is not requiring a child or an adult to be vaccinated, or to disclose vaccination status. Faculty are requested to share this information voluntarily. Face coverings **are not required at this time**, but we reserve the right to temporarily reinstate a mask requirement if significant outbreaks occur within our school community. If you wish for your child to be masked, you may certainly do so.

Our decision to forgo required masking has been carefully considered. After a year of teaching in masks in 20-21 we have concluded that it significantly impacts the quality and effectiveness of teachers in the classroom. The younger the student, the more pronounced this is. Effective teaching is heavily dependent upon a child seeing a teacher's face, and, conversely, a teacher reading feedback on a child's face. After a year of the pandemic, we now know that risk of transmission to children is low, and the danger of the virus to children is lower still. Thus we are committed to returning to as normal a teaching environment as possible.

Is it possible that we will face outbreaks in school? Yes, of course. If and when that occurs, we will quarantine appropriately (see next page).



SOCIAL DISTANCING

We will maintain social distancing within the primary classroom setting by spacing desks three feet apart where possible, and we will ensure continued excellent ventilation within the school building. We will not separate the students into cohorts.

continued



ISOLATING THE INFECTED

Current CDC recommendations for isolation due to symptomatic COVID-19 infection (or suspected COVID-19 infection without testing) are as follows:

For symptomatic COVID-19 infection:

Isolate for 10 days from onset of symptoms; end of isolation is contingent upon 24 hours free of febrility without use of antipyretic medications, and improvement of other symptoms.

For asymptomatic COVID-19 infection:

Isolate for 10 days from positive COVID-19 diagnostic test; end of isolation is contingent upon no development of symptoms.

For exposure to a confirmed case of COVID-19:

Quarantine for 10 days from date of last exposure or PCR (polymerase chain reaction) test at 5 days or beyond, breaking quarantine at 7 days if PCR test is negative.



CLEANING SURFACES

Our students, faculty, and staff made regular cleaning of frequently-touched surfaces part of their daily routine during the 20-21 school year, and we will preserve this simple prophylaxis. Disinfectant products recommended by EPA as effective against coronavirus will be utilized to disinfect spaces occupied by persons who test positive for COVID-19.



HAND SANITIZING

Students may enter the school building beginning at 7:30am, and faculty will greet them with hand sanitizer before they proceed to their designated classroom. Frequent handwashing has proven effective at reducing transmission of infectious disease in general, and faculty will continue to enforce good hand hygiene.



MONITORING SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS OF ILLNESS

It is the ongoing responsibility of students' parents and guardians to closely monitor for signs and symptoms of illness before children arrive at school. **A temperature of 100.4 or greater is ALWAYS sufficient cause to keep a child home.** If at any point during the school day a student develops symptoms suggestive of COVID-19 infection, they

will be provided a mask and quarantined to the clinic, at which point their parent or guardian will be required to retrieve them expeditiously.



CONTACT TRACING

Our school nurses, **Teresa Angell** and **Nancy Freerksen** will conduct contact tracing within the school community, partnering with VDH where indicated, when a student or teacher tests positive for COVID-19.



MONITORING THE INDICATORS

As we progress through the school year, we will use frequency and severity of outbreaks, student absenteeism, and staff capacity as indicators to help us determine if and when to instate a temporary universal masking protocol. A universal masking protocol may be imposed should multiple outbreaks occur.



SICK? STAY HOME

Above all, we urge parents and guardians to keep their students home when sick. Faculty and Staff will observe the same requirement.

With diligence, patience, and consideration, we will have another blessed and fruitful school year of in-person instruction.

Teresa Angell, RN