



July 27, 2020

Dear Parents and Guardians,

A few weeks ago I wrote to provide you with information about our reopening process for the 2020-2021 academic year. Today I am writing to update you on our plans. I know that our entire school community has been anxiously waiting for information and your patience and understanding is appreciated as we navigate this complex process. Since starting the work on our reopening plan in early May, it continues to hold true that ideas that may work one day, may no longer be relevant the next.

The health and safety of our school community has been the centerpiece of our planning and decision-making around school reopening. Ensuring we maximize learning, meet students' need for social and emotional engagement, and offer families and staff flexibility have remained top priorities. To that end, **IMS is planning a hybrid reopening on August 31st that balances in-person and remote learning for all students. We are also committed to offering all IMS families the option to receive fully virtual instruction.**

What does a hybrid reopening look like?

- Pre-Kindergarten families will have the option to return for 4 days/week of in-person instruction and 1 day/week of virtual learning. IMS will not be offering a full virtual option for Pre-Kindergarten students.
- For all families in grades K-8 that opt for in-person/hybrid instruction, students will be assigned to Group A or Group B.
 - **Group A** students will attend school in-person on Monday and Tuesday each week, while Group B students receive remote instruction on Monday and Tuesday. Our school buildings will be cleaned and disinfected every day, but after the school day on Tuesday, the buildings will undergo a more detailed cleaning and disinfecting.
 - **Group B** students will attend school in-person on Wednesday and Thursday, while Group A students receive remote instruction on Wednesday and Thursday. On Friday all students will receive remote instruction, while buildings are fully deep cleaned and disinfected.

We need your help!

To understand reopening preferences, transportation and technology needs, it is extremely important for you to complete this very brief [Family Feedback Survey](#).

Responses must to be provided by **Wednesday, July 29th** so that we can make adjustments to our plan as quickly as possible. **Your survey response is critical to our planning!**

Plan Recommendations

In accordance with medical and health guidelines from the Philadelphia Department of Health, the Pennsylvania Department of Education, and other governmental health organizations, our reopening plan is built on five key tenets, all critical to helping us maintain a healthy environment: ***Screening, Hygiene, Distancing, Masking, and Cleaning.***

- **Screening** – The most important step to prevent the spread of the virus is for parents to conduct daily symptom screening of their children ***before leaving home in the morning.*** Students and staff who do not feel well, are sick, or are symptomatic need to stay home.

Holy Cross
144 E. Mt Airy Avenue

Our Mother of Sorrows/
St. Ignatius of Loyola
617 N. 43rd Street

St. Barnabas
6334 Buist Avenue

St. Cyril of Alexandria
716 Emerson Avenue

St. Frances Cabrini
405 N. 65th Street

St. Gabriel
2917 Dickinson Street

St. Helena-Incarnation
6101 N. 5th Street

St. Malachy
1012 W. Thompson Street

St. Martin de Porres
2300 W. Lehigh Avenue

St. Martin of Tours
5701 Loretto Avenue

St. Raymond of Penafort
7940 Williams Road

St. Rose of Lima
1522 N. Wanamaker Street

St. Thomas Aquinas
1631 S. 18th Street

St. Veronica
3521 N. 6th Street

The DePaul Catholic School
44 W. Logan Street

- **Hygiene** – All schools will have required hygiene reminder signage, personal sanitizers, and other *CDC-approved* sanitizing products and equipment to strengthen hygiene practices in our buildings. We will also be promoting sanitizing measures during the school day.
- **Distancing** – In all circumstances, *we will maximize physical and social distancing wherever possible*. Classroom layouts will be modified to achieve the recommended 6ft of spacing between students, which is only possible through a hybrid model. Floor or space markers and other directional signage will also be used to guide these recommendations. Additionally, adult and parent visits to schools will be significantly limited and we will continue to encourage virtual meeting opportunities whenever possible.
- **Masking/Face Coverings** – Since masks, face shields, or other face coverings slow the spread of the virus, *the use of masks and face coverings will be expected of students and staff*. In addition to extras in each building, staff and students will each receive one washable, reusable mask at the start of the school year.
- **Cleaning** – The facilities department will put in place an enhanced and heightened regimen of cleaning in all areas that will utilize supplies and disinfectants approved for use against COVID-19. Increased ventilation, sanitizing, and additional cleaning of high-touch areas are also part of the plan to safely reopen.

Financial Matters

IMS is committed to working and collaborating with parents, ensuring the quality of learning for students receiving in-person instruction and online, and maintaining our staff and students' safety. As we have stated previously, we recognize that the pandemic and resulting stay-at-home measures have created financial burdens for our families. However, the reality of providing the equipment and structures needed to keep everyone safe is also costly, in addition to regular expenses like teacher salaries and school supplies. While tuition continues to be heavily subsidized in order to make it as affordable as possible, we are committed to continuing to explore avenues to provide additional tuition support. We will not, however, be able to issue additional discounts or offer reduced tuition. **If you have not already filled out your financial aid forms for the upcoming school year, please do so as soon as possible.**

Next Steps

We will continue to share more details of our reopening plans, and with your feedback on the [Family Survey](#), more information on our virtual learning option. We will also provide updates on any pandemic-related changes that may impact our reopening plans. As we continue to move toward decision-making, we are committed to keeping you informed of our direction.

I would like to thank family members who participated in our Stakeholder Advisory Group, providing valuable feedback and support in the planning process for reopening.

Thank you for your continued partnership and commitment to IMS.

Sincerely,

Bruce Robinson
 President & CEO
 Independence Mission Schools

**** Please remember to complete the [Family Survey](#) by Wednesday, July 29th. This information is crucial in helping us continue the planning process.**

Health and Safety Plan Summary

Facilities Cleaning, Sanitizing, Disinfecting, and Ventilation

When students and staff return to school, ensuring that surfaces throughout the building are frequently cleaned and disinfected is a top priority. A full-scale disinfecting process – with specialized equipment, used by a contracted provider – will occur weekly in each building; importantly, it will be done *between* the times when each “batch” of students is in a given space. In addition, high touch surfaces will be cleaned and disinfected several times each day. Custodial staff will be trained on how to fully and safely clean these surfaces; checklists will be used to ensure all necessary surfaces are cleaned at the proper frequency; the IMS Operations team will continue to ensure schools have the cleaning supplies they need, and the managers of School Leaders will support School Leaders with weekly reviews of the procedures and checklists to ensure all cleaning protocols are being implemented with fidelity. On a daily basis, School Leaders will complete building walkthroughs to ensure all checklists are completed around the building. Ventilation practices – from a review of existing systems and remediation if needed, to basic practices like keeping doors and windows open – are also part of the risk mitigation plan.

Social Distancing and Other Safety Protocols

Classrooms will be emptied except for desks and essential learning materials. Each classroom will be home to one “batch” or “pod” of students from Group A (Monday/Tuesday) and one batch from Group B (Wednesday/Thursday). Batches will have between 8-15 students. Students will be spaced 6 ft apart in all classrooms with desks facing in the same direction. In K-5 grade levels (at most schools) these students will spend nearly all of the day with one homeroom teacher. In 6-8 grade levels, these students will see departmentalized teachers, but those teachers will not work with students outside of those grade bands. Students will remain in their classroom throughout the day – except for recess or PE – and will not go to the cafeteria for lunch or to a library or multipurpose room where they would share a space with other students outside their batch. Students and staff will wash or sanitize their hands at least 4 times each school day. All students and staff will receive training on social distancing, masking, and hand hygiene to support a safe and healthy school environment. Visitors – including families/guardians – will not be allowed in the building except in extremely extenuating circumstances. Spacing will be maintained on buses and at arrival and dismissal through carefully choreographed drop-off and pick-up routines.

Monitoring Student and Staff Health

All students and staff will do an at-home symptom check – including a brief questionnaire about potential exposure and symptoms and a temperature check – each morning before departing for school. This information will be communicated to the school in real-time (app-based system or google form), and any students who did not have an at-home screen will be screened upon arrival. When a staff member or student becomes ill at school, they will immediately be sent home and will wait in a designated isolation space until they are able to leave/be picked up. The school nurse and/or School Leader – in consultation with the IMS HR department and Pandemic Team and local health authorities – will determine the need for quarantine and for dismissal of a batch of students or grade level. Staff members or students who test positive will remain quarantined according to the current CDC guidelines (as of this writing, 10 days since onset of symptoms, no fever in 24 hours, or two negative tests) before returning to school. Staff members who cannot return will work with their health care provider and the IMS HR Department to determine reasonable accommodations to work from home delivering remote instruction. Students who choose not to return can opt for full remote instruction. The Pandemic Team will work with local health authorities to determine communication plans for families in the case of a confirmed case, in order to rapidly notify families while maintaining confidentiality. School Leaders and school nurses will both have training in monitoring health and will follow the protocol for isolation and dismissal of students. School Leader managers will conduct a weekly review of protocols and any instances of symptom reports and isolation decisions with School Leaders.

Other Considerations for Students and Staff

All staff members will wear approved face coverings (loop around the ear, cover mouth and nose completely) while on campus, taking masks off only when in a room without other children or adults or when outside and 6ft or more away

from others. Staff at a higher risk from COVID-19 will work with their health care provider and the IMS HR Department to determine reasonable accommodations; students with risk factors may opt for fully remote instruction. The IMS home office is working with staffing agencies and on the in-house staffing model to ensure a sufficient number of substitutes are available in case of teacher absences. Most teachers will provide both in-person and remote instruction, while some will be responsible entirely for remote instruction.

[P.S. Please remember to complete the Family Survey by Wednesday, July 29th.](#)
[This information is crucial in helping us continue the planning process.](#)