



August 27, 2021

Greetings Holy Spirit families,

With the current climate around the Fox Valley, school boards are now getting more accurate data to make decisions on how to open schools safely for in-person education. I felt the need to call an emergency Education Committee meeting on August 26, 2021 to reevaluate our reopening plan. Our board had a fruitful discussion about what is best for our school community. We had representation and opinions for both mandating masks and continuing to make masks optional. In the end, we felt that following eight of the nine multiple layers of prevention strategies outlined by the [CDC](#) recommendations for K-12 schools is what Holy Spirit Catholic School is going to stick with. Meaning, we are going to continue with masks optional for students and staff members, both vaccinated and unvaccinated. Holy Spirit is not a large public school district with thousands of students and families. We are a small school community with 250 students and a little over 100 families. I can say confidently that this decision is in line with other smaller parish schools throughout the Diocese of Green Bay, like Holy Spirit, that are going mask optional right now. Our Education Committee will be reevaluating this decision as needed throughout the year.

Below is copied and pasted from our original school re-opening plan on August 4, 2021, with the mask update for small groups that went out to parents on August 19, 2021 in the orientation directions. Below is the plan Holy Spirit is going to continue to go with as we start and continue the 2021-22 school year.

### **Prevention Strategies**

- **Promoting vaccination** – As of [August 19](#), 50.58% of the Outagamie County residents have completed their vaccine series and 3.18% have started their vaccine series. Also, about 63.4% of vaccine-eligible residents have at least begun their vaccine series.
  - Currently people ages 12+ are eligible to receive a COVID-19 vaccination. We encourage anyone who is eligible to receive a [COVID-19 vaccine](#) receive one.
  - Governor Tony Evers and the Wisconsin Department of Health Services (DHS) announced Wisconsin residents who get their first dose of any COVID-19 vaccine from a vaccine provider located in Wisconsin beginning August 20 through September 6 can receive a \$100 Visa Gift Card. Wisconsin residents ages 12 and over are eligible for the reward and can request the reward by going to the [Reward Sign-up page](#). Proof of insurance, citizenship, or ID is not required to be eligible for or to receive the \$100.
- **Physical Distancing** – Per the CDC, to begin the year K-grade 8 students will be in the classroom with at least 3 feet of physical distance between students in the classroom. Preschool 3 and 4K will not be expected to have a physically distant classroom. As we know preschool learning is more social emotional, sharing, communicating with friends, handling your emotions, etc. Remaining physically distant from friends is not best practice for meeting their educational needs.
- **Screening testing to promptly identify cases**
  - We are asking for parental help/support in ***asking your child(ren) or screening them for COVID19 symptoms daily before school.***  
[Health Screening Checklist 2021-22](#)

- If your child has multiple symptoms, please contact the school. We will work with you and your health care provider to determine if the need for a COVID-19 test is necessary.
- If a child is symptomatic and is being tested for COVID-19, siblings will be allowed to come to school, while we wait for those test results. If the test is positive, siblings will be sent home and close contacts will be notified.
- Rapid antigen or POC and PCR tests will be accepted this school year.
- **Ventilation** – We have reviewed to make sure adequate air supply is occurring in the classrooms and will continue to check, clean, and replace air filters as appropriate.
- **Handwashing and respiratory etiquette** – We will continue to promote handwashing or hand sanitizing throughout the day. We also will promote or reinforce respiratory etiquette (covering coughs and sneezes in your elbow or tissue) to keep from getting and spreading infectious illnesses including COVID-19.
- **Staying home when sick and getting tested** – Students, teachers, and staff who have symptoms of infectious illness, such as influenza (flu) or COVID-19, should stay home and be referred to their healthcare provider for testing and care.
- **Contact tracing, in combination with isolation and quarantine** – If any student or staff member does test positive for COVID-19, that person will be expected to follow the [isolation timeline](#) recommended by the CDC. Holy Spirit will be contacting any close contacts in that case.
- **Cleaning and disinfection** – We will continue to clean and disinfect the school, similar to how we did last school year.

## Masks

Because we will have these multiple layers of prevention in place, at this point we feel comfortable starting the school year with masks optional for students and staff members, both vaccinated and unvaccinated. Whether a student or staff member chooses to wear or not wear a mask, we ask that everyone remain respectful of that person's decision. Some students or staff members may continue to wear a mask to protect others as well as themselves. Some might elect to not wear a mask. At this point that is okay. Masks will be required if our school has over 10% of the student body with a positive COVID-19 test. Masks will continue to be required until the school achieves an infection rate of less than 5%.

There is one exception to the mask optional policy. Many of the K-grade 5 teachers have kidney bean tables or rectangle tables in their classrooms to work with small groups in reading, math, etc. This is best practice for effective teaching/learning to work with small groups like this.

### ***Updated Close Contact Definition for K-12 schools***

1. Looking on page 16 of the "[Guidelines for Prevention, Investigation, and control of COVID-19 Outbreaks in K-12 Schools in Wisconsin – August 2021](#)" "[Exception](#)": In the K-12 indoor classroom setting, the close contact definition excludes students where were within 3-6 feet of an infected student if: both students were engaged in consistent and correct use of well-fitting masks; and other K-12 prevention strategies were in place in the K-12 school setting." See table 2 on page 17.
2. Looking on page 9 of the "[DPI – COVID-19 Infection Control and Mitigation Measures for Wisconsin Schools 2021/22 – August 2021](#)" document in the middle paragraph is says, "Note the CDC and DHS guidelines for the 2021-2022 school year include the added [exception in the close contact definition](#) for students in K-12 indoor classrooms who are within 3 to 6 feet of an infected student with masking and other prevention strategies. This exception applies in the classroom when there is universal mask wearing, increased ventilation and both students were consistently and correctly wearing a well fitted mask."



This means that if we have both individuals wearing a mask and one of them tests positive, the other may not be deemed a close contact if they were 3-6 feet apart because they both were properly wearing a mask.

**Therefore, with this new CDC definition of close contact when students are working closely in small groups (like at a kidney bean table with a teacher and other students), Holy Spirit is going to require K-grade 8 students/staff to wear a mask. This will only be for the time they are working in close proximity of another person for an extended period of time.** If we have students wearing a mask (who are normally opting not to wear one), when they are working closely in a small group setting, this could save students from having to quarantine if we have a positive case because everyone was wearing a mask. We are just trying to keep students in school as much as possible. If students normally would be opting not to wear a mask, they would only be required to wear on for a short period of time. We think that's a good and safe compromise to keep students in school learning as much as possible.

Students who are opting not to wear a mask all the time in the classroom setting, would have a mask at school and be required to wear it if they are working closely in a small group for an extended period of time. If they are electing to not wear a mask, they do not need to wear one when they are in the classroom at their desk or in the hallway, etc. **So, please make sure your K-grade 8 student(s) have a mask at school because they may be using it for short periods of time throughout the day.**

Thank you for your help in trying to keep our school as safe and healthy as possible.

God bless,

Mike Zuleger, Principal



## Mission Statement

*The mission of Holy Spirit Catholic School is to serve God by providing a challenging academic education within the Catholic Tradition.*