

Grace Christian School 2020-2021 School Year Opening Plan and Protocols

In a coordinated effort with our governing authorities, the Ohio Department of Health and the Ohio Department of Education, we are thrilled to welcome our full respective preschool – 8th grade student population to the 2020-2021 school year on Wednesday, August 5, 2020. Our school week will be a five-day in-person educational environment. We will have meaningful virus-related protocols in place to help create the safest environment possible for our students, staff and community. Our school nurse, Sandy Nolen, RN, has been instrumental in helping us craft the planning and implementation of these protocols that will balance safety with the important norms of being a child in school.

Social distancing will be practiced where practical or possible. We have the blessing of using additional space in our two buildings, which will allow us to space student desks according to social distancing guidelines. The hallmark of Christian education – teaching all subjects with a Biblical worldview - will still be the core and foundation of who we are. Art, Spanish, and music classes will take place in the core classrooms. Students will be participating in recess activities, physical education classes in our gymnasium, and lunch in our cafeteria in a manner that allows them to have critical peer interactions in a safe manner.

More specific communications about the start of the school year will be sent by the administrative staff and your child's teacher(s) to you directly in the coming weeks. It is incredibly important to us that each student continues to feel loved, cared for, nurtured, and safe at Grace Christian School. Yes, virus-related safety protocols are very important, but so are spiritual, academic, mental, and emotional health and safety. We have worked very hard to make sure the important physical safety protocols do not radically become invasive to each student's wholistic well-being and learning.

Provided below are some of the specific protocols that we have put in place for the 2020-2021 school year. The listed protocols are not inclusive of all of the GCS safety actions but are provided to give our community a general sense of what protocols we will put in place. Some of these protocols may change (relaxed or enhanced) throughout the school year based on directives from ODH and/or ODE. Keep in mind, many of these protocols are *temporary* for the 2020-2021 school year; the important fact is that our students will be back in school five days a week and receiving Biblical worldview instruction in an optimal, vibrant, in-person learning environment!

General Guidelines

- If you are sick, stay home (students and staff).
- Students and staff will be reminded on an ongoing basis to frequently wash their hands. They will also be reminded to use hand sanitizer every time they enter and exit each classroom (dispensers have been installed in each room and throughout each building).
- Grace Christian School is not requiring students to wear face masks; however, all students are permitted to wear face masks should the parent or student desire to do so.

The Ohio Department of Health (ODH) strongly recommends 3rd – 8th grade students wear face masks at school. Students who do want to wear masks are encouraged to bring their personal masks to school with them; it's the student's responsibility to care for their mask and wear it properly. We will also have a significant supply of masks available in the school office for students and adults, provided upon request. Teachers and staff will be required to wear face shields or masks as protective wear, per the Governor's school reopening orders.

- Students should bring a filled water bottle labeled with their name to school every day. There will not be drinking fountains available for use, however, we have installed UV filter water bottle fillers at each water fountain location. Students will be encouraged to drink water and refill their bottles throughout the day.
- We are asking parents to take their child's temperature daily before leaving home for school. If a temperature is recorded at 100 degrees or higher, the student must stay at home. Parents would then need to contact our school nurse, Sandy Nolen, RN, for further directions. If a student comes to school having had a fever (100 degrees or more) within the previous 72 hours, parents will be called, and we will need a doctor's release permitting the student to return to school.
- Our medical office has been expanded in size to include an isolation/quarantine room for those students who have a temperature of 100 or greater while at school, COVID-19 symptoms, vomiting, etc. to limit the spread of a virus while waiting for a parent to pick them up from school.
- Parents should make sure the school has current emergency phone numbers so that we can reach you if your child is sick. It is required that parents have back up plans in place for authorized persons to pick up your child within 30 minutes of being contacted by the school communicating that your child is sick. Sandy Nolen will provide additional guidance regarding your child's return to school.
- If any student is confirmed to have the virus, ODH will direct next steps for that respective student population.
- If a student is absent for a week or more (quarantined), the student and parent will be able to access schoolwork via Google Classroom. Otherwise, if a student is absent for 1-3 days, the student can retrieve missed work upon their return to school. If the student is absent 4-5 days, parents can pick up missed work in the school office.

Classroom Protocols

- Desks will be spaced to allow recommended social distancing between students and staff.
- All desks will face the same direction.
- All personal items (coats, backpacks, etc.) will not be kept in lockers to support social distancing needs. These items will be kept in individual classroom storage bins.
- Hand sanitizer dispensers will be available in all instructional areas and throughout the school buildings.
- Air filtration systems with HEPA filters are located in each classroom and office space, which have proven to be highly effective in mitigating viruses.

- Classroom entry/exit routines and hallway traffic patterns will be established to support social distancing. These patterns will be facilitated in a gracious manner that provides for safety.
- Teachers will be able to schedule their classes in various outside learning spaces on our campus to allow the students to experience movement and learning in a fresh air setting.
- Student devices, keyboards, and mice will be wiped down between each class period and at the end of the school day. Desks, door handles and other common touch points will also be wiped down during the day and then addressed by the after-school cleaning crew.
- Tissues will be available within each classroom. Any student displaying signs of sickness will be immediately referred to the school nurse for assessment.

Field Trips

- All normal school field trips are on hold for the 2020-2021 school year until further guidance and permissions are given by ODH/ODE.

Cafeteria Protocols

- Lunchtime schedules will be staggered, and students will be socially distanced in the cafeteria to manage the number of students being served and eating lunch at one time. Students will easily still be able to socialize and converse with each other; they will be able to do so in a safe manner.
- When possible, please use all disposable materials (paper bags, plastic utensils) to pack lunches.
- Parents will be able to purchase school lunches on a monthly basis; watch for more information from Miss Grace. Purchased lunches will be served in disposable containers with disposable utensils.

Restroom Protocols

- All restrooms will routinely be checked by staff for cleanliness, sanitation, and appropriate supplies.
- Students will frequently be reminded to wash their hands.

Recess Protocols

- Students will be reminded of social distancing guidelines; these conversations will occur with grace and care. They are children and their social and emotional needs will be kept in balance.
- The playground equipment will frequently be sprayed with a sanitizing spray by custodial staff.
- All students must sanitize hands before reentry into the classrooms.

Ekklesia/Chapel

- Until ODH permits mass gatherings, Ekklesia/Chapel will take place in each classroom using Mrs. Phillips' Google Classroom.
- Worship singing will occur with social distancing in mind.
- There will be different speakers each week. Until we can meet together in larger groups in the auditorium, students will view the speakers' recorded messages in their classrooms.

Choir/Orchestra

- Music instruction will take place in the individual classrooms. At this time, large group choirs and performances are not practical until we are given the "green light" from ODH.
- Likewise, orchestra will not occur as an assembled group for the reasons stated above. Additionally, Mrs. Eades (our orchestra director) is due to give birth to her first child in August. She will continue as our middle school science teacher this year; however, she is taking a sabbatical from orchestra directing. Students who desire to continue to practice and enhance their string instrument skills can contact Mrs. Eades to arrange private lessons with her or with other local string instructors.

Physical Education Protocols

- PE classes will take place in the gymnasium. The classes will focus on personal fitness, conditioning and games/skills that will allow for proper distancing.
- Athletic balls and equipment will diligently be sanitized.
- After leaving PE class, students will sanitize their hands.

Athletic Sport Protocols

- In following guidelines set forth by the Ohio High School Athletic Association (OHSAA) and ODH, we plan to facilitate full athletic schedules.
- Currently, teams are permitted to gather for practices and intra-squad scrimmages but cannot engage in any competition with other schools. We will proceed to get ready for our fall sports season and will await further direction from OHSAA and ODH.
- Home and away indoor contests will probably have limited capacity for fans and may include immediate family members only to allow for social distancing.

Before and After School Extended Care Programs and Study Tables

- Extended care programs and study tables will be offered and follow the same safety procedures as during the regular school day.
- Within the next few weeks, you will receive an email regarding more specific details about the extended care program and study tables; the new transition protocol between the end of daily dismissal and the start of extended care/study tables will allow for a safer and smoother process. Additionally, the location of K-8 extended care rooms will be moved to a more convenient and practical location. Stay tuned for more details!

Extra-curricular Activity/General Building Access Protocols

- No outside Chapel speakers, classroom/lunchroom volunteers, etc. will be able to participate inside the school buildings until ODH gives more specific direction to do so safely. This protocol really hurts our hearts and souls. This is not the way we “do community” at GCS; however, we understand that keeping the population of people coming in and out of our buildings to a standard, consistent number of people will provide an extra level of safety to combat the virus.
- When coming into the main building to drop off your child late or pick your child up early, please ring the doorbell, and you will be given instructions regarding whether to come directly into the main office or line up outside the office using social distancing (there will be markings on the floor). We will be ready to assist you as quickly as possible.
- Please note that when picking up your child early from school for an appointment, be sure to note their early dismissal in School Pass on the given day so that the teachers and staff can have your child ready to leave. The latest time a child can be picked up for an early dismissal will be 1:00 pm (unless you have been contacted by Mrs. Nolen to pick up an ill child). Please make sure to note this important time frame. We must consistently adhere to this 1:00 pm time frame to facilitate all early dismissals within a safe protocol. Thank you for understanding!

God is sovereign over all things; His sovereignty is a true peace and comfort when the brokenness of the world does not make sense. Trusting His sovereignty and demonstrating His ultimate grace and love to each other is what we, as believers, are called to do. As GCS teachers and staff members, we commit to love abundantly and show lots of grace as we navigate these temporary new procedures.

Some of these procedures and protocols (e.g. better and more frequent hand washing, UV filtered water bottle fillers in place of drinking fountains, and enhanced medical protocols) make logical sense as long-term, improved safety measures. Other protocols are temporary and will be balanced in such a way that will not feel regimented for our students; rather, these protocols will provide a safe environment for our students in light of the virus. The safety of our students always has – and always will be – paramount for all of us. Let’s all keep praying God’s Word together and communicating love with each other. In Christ, 2020-2021 can be our best school year ever, and God can and will be so glorified!!

Grace and peace,

Cindy Phillips
Head of School
Grace Christian School