

August 13, 2021



Dear Saint Anthony of Padua School Community,

The start of the school year is fast approaching and the teachers are setting up their shiny classrooms to welcome a new group of students. Of course, we must prepare not only for fresh workbooks and new faces. In our present reality, we must also prepare to soldier on in the face of a global pandemic. As parents, we know too well what the past 18 months has meant for all children. We share a common goal of enabling our students to live this school year to the fullest. Children are resilient and it is our sincere hope that with God's grace, we can help them to make up for lost time. All sources agree that IN-PERSON instruction is the singular most important thing we can provide to our children now. It is our intention that St. Anthony's will offer in-person instructions to all grades, all weeks. As we prepare for the opening of the 2021-2022 school year, we look forward to partnering with families and the local health district to provide a safe environment for our students.

After careful review of the State Public Health Commissioner's Order of Public Health Emergency effective 8/12/21, along with previous guidance from the Virginia Department of Health (VDH), data driven analysis from Virginia Department of Education (VDOE), the CDC and the American Academy of Pediatrics newly published guidelines, we will be masking. I am encouraged that we should be able to **eliminate much of the need for virtual instruction and quarantining of classrooms**. We are also no longer required to maintain social distancing while masks are worn. Students will travel to their Specials classes again. We can gather as a community, and invite parents into our school. We can plan festivals and field trips again! With the exception of the masks, I dare to hope that this school year might actually feel "normal".

The most current guidance available from VDH provides our school with the opportunity to review and adjust our strategies for the upcoming school year with a greater level of insight. As we have seen with the Delta variant, the situation can quickly change. We will continue to regularly monitor the following data sources and keep you informed of any need to increase our strategies in response to a particular outbreak in the school or surge in the community.

Infectivity Data Dashboard - Any future decision to amend this plan will be informed by the Virginia Department of Health School Metrics – Data pertaining to School Metrics and the level of transmission in the community can be found on the VDH website:

<https://www.vdh.virginia.gov/coronavirus/key-measures/pandemic-metrics/school-metrics/> .

The metric categories include Low Transmission, Moderate Transmission, Substantial Transmission, and High Transmission. Two measures are used to determine the level of community transmission: the total number of cases in the past seven days and the percentage of tests that are positive in the past seven days.

Vaccine Data Dashboard - Vaccine data on the Virginia Department of Health website helps us understand community level vaccination coverage:

<https://www.vdh.virginia.gov/coronavirus/covid-19-vaccine-demographics/>.

Age-group vaccination statistics in our jurisdiction will provide important data to estimate vaccination coverage. Although children 12 years of age and older are eligible for the Covid-19 vaccine, policies and procedures will remain consistent across all grade levels, since students will be moving throughout the building and interacting with each other during recess, Mass, and other school-wide activities.

Indicator	Low Transmission	Moderate Transmission	Substantial Transmission	High Transmission
Total new cases per 100,000 persons in past 7 days	0-9	10-49	50-99	>=100
Percentage of NAATs that are positive in past 7 days	<5.0%	5.0%-7.9%	8.0%-9.9%	>10.0%

The following is a summary of planned operational procedures for the opening of the 2021-2022 academic year. It is important to note that this plan will serve as a baseline and is subject to change in accordance with the following key metrics: rate of transmission in the community, rate of vaccine coverage in the building and/or the local jurisdictions, and the number of cases in the building.

Disinfecting- We will continue to disinfect all areas at least daily. High touch and shared areas will be disinfected more frequently.

Hand Washing- We will continue to require hand washing with soap and water on a regular basis, particularly before and after eating. Hand sanitizer will also be available and used when necessary between opportunities to wash.

Self-Isolating When Symptomatic- The most important strategy for keeping everyone safe is to stay home when sick. By keeping symptomatic students at home, everyone else can safely attend. Parents are responsible for assessing their child's health and symptom status each morning before leaving home.

Health Screenings- The VDH guideline of encouraging parents to be responsible for monitoring the health of their children prior to the start of the school day is consistent with Catholic teaching that parents are the primary educators of their children. As our partners in education, it is crucial to our ability to provide a safe school environment that parents do their part. Each family will assess their students BEFORE coming to school and remain responsible for keeping them home if there are any symptoms. We will not take temperatures as students arrive, but we reserve the right to take temperatures throughout the day as necessary.

Illness- Children who are brought to school with fevers, vomiting, diarrhea or other symptoms of contagious or infectious diseases will be sent home promptly and excluded from school FOR 2 DAYS. Until the student is:

- confirmed to be free of communicable illness by a healthcare provider
- is fever-free/symptom-free for 48 HOURS without taking medications

the student may not return to school or attend any school-sponsored activities.

Outdoor activities- Recess, Physical Education, and other outdoor activities will provide a safe and much needed break from mask wearing. Students may choose to wear a mask even when outdoors, if they wish.

Indoor masking- To ensure a safe start to the school year, all students, staff and visitors will wear a well-fitting mask while indoors regardless of vaccination status. Gaiters and masks with valves are not permitted. Because they are masked, classmates will NOT be made to quarantine in the event of school exposure, since the masks precludes classmates from meeting the definition of “Close Contact”.\

Lunch- We will once again be eating in the cafeteria. Students will be positioned 6 feet away from each other while unmasked during the lunch time.

*(Preschoolers will be distanced in their classrooms for snack, lunch and nap).

Covid exposure/quarantine- We will continue to take our directives from the Fairfax County Health Department to determine when unvaccinated students or adults would need to quarantine due to exposure. Anyone who is vaccinated AND any classmates who are wearing a mask when not 6 feet apart will NOT need to quarantine in the event of exposure. The school will only provide a virtual option for instruction when the health department mandates a quarantine of a class as a direct result of documented school-based exposure.

Events- We will bring back most of our time- honored school traditions throughout the year. We are hosting a Meet the Teacher event on August 18th from 4pm-5pm and Back to School Nights on September 1. Please note: Any school sponsored event will require all those in attendance to wear a mask.

We are aware that most of our students who are 12 and older have already chosen to be vaccinated. This fact does not exempt them from the current universal mask mandate which is being put in place out of Christian concern for the vast majority of our student body who remain too young for vaccination.

The leadership team and I will continue to review all mitigation practices on a weekly basis. Any changes to the policies stated in this plan will be based on the data and advice provided by the FCHD, VHD, CDC and the Office of Catholic Schools for the Diocese of Arlington and will be transparently shared with the school community.

Parent feedback is welcomed and encouraged. Please feel free to email me directly: afry@stanthonyschoolva.org to share your support, concerns and questions. I look forward to meeting you in person soon! Amy Fry, Principal