Regina Academies
Guidelines for Safely Reopening our Schools.

Revised Aug 20, 2020

The Regina Academies are classical schools[i], and in classical schools students learn through a dialogue between the teacher and students. As *Catholic* classical schools, we especially honor the Logos – the Word Made Flesh. Through a relationship with him, we come to know the glory of the Father and grow in grace and truth. In fact, the incarnation is the model and foundation of our curriculum. It is not only WHY we teach and WHAT we teach – it is HOW we teach. Catholic classical schools teach as Jesus taught: by word and example, person to person and heart to heart. We trust that by following his example, our students will grow in wisdom and virtue to become the distinct individuals God created them to be. While safety is our first concern, the integrity of our model of classical education is a great consideration.

Our Catholic community[ii] is the heart of the Regina Academies and the last several months of being separated from that community have been painful for our teachers and students. We look forward to welcoming everyone back into our schools in the fall. Technology has been an essential, but poor substitute for the personal interaction that is HOW we teach in our schools.

Guiding Principles: Concern for Children's Safety

As much as we look forward to having everyone back in school, **our first concern is safety**. The initial modeling of the spread of the Coronavirus has never reached the level initially projected, but the tragic loss of life has devastated many families. Prudence dictates a reasonable degree of caution in reopening our schools.

While the Covid-19 pandemic remains a threat, children under 12 make up a very small percentage of total cases. Twenty-two percent of the U.S. population is children and they make up only 2 percent of all cases[iii]. The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) has reviewed all available research from countries where schools have already reopened[iv] schools and presents the following:

- A 9-year-old boy in France with the virus exposed 80 classmates, but none of them contracted the virus.
- In Australia, nine students and nine staff members infected with the virus had close contact with 735 students and 128 staff members. Only two additional people were infected.
- In a hospital in China, 65 of 68 children with Covid-19 were likely infected by adults in their households, not the other way around.

Additional documentation of the European experience in reopening schools can be researched online. One source is here.[v]

Some are concerned that children may spread the virus to others, but a May 7 article[vi] in the journal *Nature* questions how effectively children are able to transmit the virus to others.

Evidence suggests they may not, however recent research[vii] from South Korea and others suggest that this may only be true for younger children up to nine years old. Some of those published studies acknowledge their limitations and the possibility of other factors in the transmission of Covid-19.

In reality the various research that has been done is still conflicting and inconclusive. An article in the August 2020 issue of *Pediatrics*, the official journal of the American Academy of Pediatrics, concludes by saying:

> *Almost 6 months into the pandemic, accumulating evidence and collective experience argue that children, particularly school-aged children, are far less important drivers of SARS-CoV-2 transmission than adults. Therefore, serious consideration should be paid toward strategies that allow schools to remain open, even during periods of COVID-19 spread. In doing so, we could minimize the potentially profound adverse social, developmental, and health costs that our children will continue to suffer until an effective treatment or vaccine can be developed and distributed or, failing that, until we reach herd immunity*[viii]

As a Catholic community, our concern for everyone's safety is more than physical. Our concern for children is that they feel safe and secure physically, emotionally, and spiritually in their homes *and* in school. **Children have the least to gain from lockdowns and the most to lose**. They should not be expected to live in fear, and the best way for them to not be fearful and remain positive is to rejoin their peers and re-establish routines.

The CDC *Considerations for Schools*[ix] acknowledge that their guidelines must be adjusted "to meet the unique needs and circumstances of the local community." To this end, all of the Regina Academies will generally follow the guidelines outlined below. **Since our schools are geographically diverse, some modifications may be made to these guidelines by each school as their unique circumstances allow.**

We encourage families, if at all possible, to have their children tested to see if they might have already had Covid-19. It is increasingly obvious that the Coronavirus was present in our society at least a month before any confirmed case. Many children exhibit very light, or no symptoms, and knowing that your child has already had Covid-19, and therefore immune to further infection, will reduce any anxiety parents may have in returning your children to school.

Regina Academies Guidelines:

Promoting Behaviors that Reduce Spread

The Regina Academies respect parent's primary role in protecting their children. Therefore, we ask that parents assume the first responsibility of encouraging behaviors that limit the spread of Covid-19 in our schools.

1) Temperature Checks
   a) Each school will decide if it is prudent to check temperatures as students enter the school each day. This determination will be made by the number of cases active in their area, a

known possible infection, and capacity. Parents are asked to check their children's temperature before they leave for school in the morning.
    i) NOTE: The effectiveness of temperature screenings, especially for children, is unknown. According to the Centers for Disease Control (CDC)[x], children are less likely to develop a fever or cough if infected with Covid-19.
b) Please keep children home if there is any sign of illness, if they have a temperature of at least 100.4 degrees, or have tested positive or are showing Covid-19 symptoms[xi] including fever or chills, cough, shortness of breath, loss of taste or smell.
c) Students who feel ill at school or who have a fever will be sent home.

2) Exposure
   a) Students or teachers who have recently had close contact with a person with Covid-19 should notify the school and stay at home to monitor their health.
3) Hygiene
   a) Students will be asked to bring a small bottle of hand sanitizer (at least 60% alcohol) and a container of disinfecting wipes to school as a part of their supply list.
   b) Desks will be cleaned with disinfecting wipes at the end of each day.
   c) Hand sanitizer will be provided at the entrance to the school and in the classrooms. Students will be required to wash hands or use hand sanitizer when entering the classroom and before and after lunch and snack.
4) Face Coverings

   According to an August 17 revision of the face covering orders for schools from the PA Department of Health and the PA Department of Education, all students over 2 years old are now required to wear a face covering at school. It is important to note the following provisions of the revised order:
   a) A plastic face shield may be worn in place of cloth face coverings. A variety of options are available.
   b) The order makes provision for exceptions to the order for medical or mental health conditions, or disability. Schools may require documentation of the condition.
   c) 10 minute breaks are permitted throughout the day and coverings are not required if eating or drinking, or if they would be unsafe.

Maintaining Healthy Environments

Each Regina Academy will implement strategies to maintain healthy environments.

- Cleaning and Disinfection
  - Staff will routinely clean and disinfect touched surfaces throughout the day including playground equipment, door handles, sink handles and any shared object.
  - School cleaning products will be stored safely away from children.
  - Classrooms will be deep cleaned if any student in the class is confirmed to have Covid-19.
- Sharing Objects
  - Children should come to school with the materials they need for their own personal use. Teachers will provide supply lists. Please make sure all supplies are in containers and clearly marked. The sharing of supplies is discouraged.
  - Any communal supplies or equipment will be cleaned between each student's use.

    - Water fountains will not be available. Students should bring a water bottle with them to school that is labeled for their own use. Bottle may be filled during the day.
    - The Head of School in coordination with the early childhood teachers will determine the best way to manage sharing of objects in Montessori or other classrooms.
- Desks and Tables
    - Desks will be placed as far apart as possible and seating at tables also safely placed to ensure minimal contact.
        - Note that the WHO recommendation for physical distancing is one meter, or half the distance established by the CDC in the US. Countries following the WHO recommendation have had no greater incidence of Covid-19 than we have had in the U.S.
    - Barriers will not be placed between students in classrooms. We are committed to ensuring the safety of children but wish to avoid instilling in them any sense that they or their peers are a threat to the other's safety.
- Communal Spaces
    - Any use of communal spaces such as the church, cafeterias, and playgrounds will be staggered and cleaned after use.
    - Restrooms will be thoroughly cleaned at the end of each day.
- Food Service
    - Lunch will be managed on a school-by-school basis depending upon the space and staffing available. The availability of school lunches will be determined on a school by school basis.
- Morning Forum
    - Each Head of School will determine the best and safest way to conduct Morning Forum in their school.

Maintaining Healthy Operations

The primary concern of every Regina Academy is the safety of students and staff. To that end, the following general guidelines will be in place at each school

- High risk students and faculty
    - Virtual learning opportunities will be provided as requested to students who may be immune compromised, or who have another medical condition that places them at a greater risk should they become sick with Covid-19.
    - Individual privacy will be respected at all times and no medical information will ever be shared.
- Flexibility in Attendance
    - Schools will be flexible in enforcing policies regarding absence. Parents are encouraged to keep children at home without penalty if there is any question of illness.
    - There will be no awards for perfect attendance until further notice.
- Visitors to School

    - For the time being, no nonessential visitors will be admitted into the school. Parents will be admitted into the school lobby only as needed to conduct school business. If a phone call will suffice in lieu of a visit to school, please make the call. Visitors will always be asked to wear masks while on the premises.
- Small Groups (Cohorts)
    - The school will make every effort to keep students together in small groups, e.g., their individual class, to limit exposure to others.
- Communications
    - Each school will implement a parent communication system to notify parents of any significant event affecting the school.
- Staff Training
    - Each school will train staff on proper safety during the beginning of the year in-service meetings.
    - Faculty will be updated regularly regarding protocols and the heads of school, or their delegate, will ensure that safety protocols are being enforced in the school.

What Do We Do If Someone Gets Sick?

- Clean and Disinfect
    - If someone becomes sick with Covid-19, the student's or teacher's classroom will be closed and disinfected with no further admittance for 24 hours.
- Notifications
    - Parents will be notified in general if there is a confirmed case of Covid-19 in a school. Parents in the class where the virus appeared will be notified that their children might have been exposed and are directed to contact their medical provider for further guidance.
- Quarantine
    - Anyone diagnosed with Covid-19 should be isolated according to the CDC guidelines and will not be allowed to return to school until cleared by their physician.

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[i] See https://reginaacademies.org/2020/02/06/catholic-education/
[ii] See https://reginaacademies.org/the-regina-academies-faithfully-catholic/
[iii] CDC statistic referenced here: https://www.nbcnews.com/health/kids-health/back-school-what-doctors-say-about-children-covid-19-n1233550
[iv] See https://pediatrics.aappublications.org/content/early/2020/07/08/peds.2020-004879
[v] https://www.axios.com/europe-lessons-reopening-schools-b713801e-26d6-4ba1-bb9e-c0b0b5809a11.html
[vi] See https://www.nature.com/articles/d41586-020-01354-0
[vii] See https://www.sciencealert.com/older-children-transmit-covid-19-as-much-as-adults-do-new-evidence-suggests
[viii] See https://pediatrics.aappublications.org/content/146/2/e2020004879
[ix] See https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/schools-childcare/schools.html
[x] https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/69/wr/mm6914e4.htm?s_cid=mm6914e4_w
[xi] https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/symptoms-testing/symptoms.html