

NORTHSIDE CHRISTIAN SCHOOL

REVISED: BACK TO SCHOOL PLAN 2021-22

Updated as of 9/7/2021



Northside Christian School

2655 W Schrock Rd, Westerville OH 43081

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Introduction

As we have planned for the new school year, we have prayed for wisdom and discernment. We are truly faced with too much information and, of course, just as many opinions about how to proceed in this unique time. **We have noted that all of the mitigation efforts we pursued last year resulted in extremely low rates of community spread at our school.** We also greatly reduced absences from school for any other illness. Our staff, faculty, and students all maintained better health than a typical school year. Bearing all of this in mind, we are making some changes to last year's policy, although we reserve the possibility that these decisions may change as new information about the delta variant surfaces.

Scripture describes the source and fruit of true wisdom in many places. One is in James 3. We are told that "...the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, open to reason, full of mercy and good fruits, impartial and sincere. And a harvest of righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace."

The wisdom we want applied to the operation of NCS is "from above." According to James, it will be peaceable and open to reason and will lead to righteous fruit. **We pray that our decisions reflect a wisdom like this and that whatever we do, it leads to good fruit in the lives of the entire NCS family.**

As we present our plans for re-opening school for the fall below, we recognize that our situation may change. Therefore, we ask that you pray with us for divine wisdom and understanding. We know He will lead us to what is best for NCS.

According to recent studies and the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP), **continuing to keep children physically out of school could have long-term detrimental effects on academic progress, mental and emotional well-being and behavior.** A recent AAP report says, "The AAP strongly advocates that all policy considerations for the coming school year should start with the goal of having students physically present in school. No child should be excluded from school unless required to adhere to local public health mandates or because of unique medical needs."

The AAP report also says, "Although many questions remain, the preponderance of evidence indicates that children and adolescents are less likely to be symptomatic and less likely to have severe disease resulting from SARS-CoV-2 infection. Also, children may be less likely to become infected and spread infection. Policies to mitigate the spread of COVID-19 within schools must be balanced with the known harms to children, adolescents, families, and the community by keeping children at home."

Given that our students are generally not a high-risk group along with the knowledge that some in our faculty and staff group are high risk, we seek to have a balanced approach to mitigating spread of the virus at NCS during the school day. We want to provide a safe workspace for our staff AND provide a safe and optimal space for our students to learn and grow.

Below are the main steps we will take as we seek to mitigate the risks of COVID-19. **Note that our plans may change as we review guidance from health and state authorities and consider**

feedback from the entire NCS family. We may also need to reinstate some mitigation measures if we find that the delta variant of COVID-19 warrants it.

Overview of changes to last year's policy

- **We are temporarily requiring masks for grades 5-12 and any adults who interact with them, while the delta variant continues to spread in our community.** We are monitoring the [Columbus metro area daily new cases](#). We will return to optional masks when the rate reaches 10 cases per day per 100,000 people or lower.
- **We are discontinuing temperature checks at the door,** but we ask that you remain vigilant about your child's health and the symptom list included here.
- We will not have one-directional hallways or lanes marked.
- The CDC has stated that the delta variant of the COVID-19 virus is as contagious as chicken pox, so we want to continue all other mitigation strategies, including regular hand-washing and social distancing.
- The BJU Fall Fine Arts Festival will not be virtual this year, and our participation as a school is still to be determined.

Overall Goals

- Enable NCS students to LEARN and GROW this year.
- Provide a safe place for students and staff where risks are mitigated.
- As much as possible, return to normal classroom instruction and school activities.
- Appropriately consider the concerns, feedback, and suggestions from the NCS family.
- Adhere to government guidelines and the advice of health experts in order to mitigate risk.

Scriptural Insight

- **We are ultimately here to glorify our Lord and love one another.** 1 Peter 4:8–11 - Above all, keep loving one another earnestly, since love covers a multitude of sins...As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God's varied grace...by the strength that God supplies—in order that in everything God may be glorified through Jesus Christ. To him belong glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.
- **Uncertainty is certain.** James 4:13–15 - Come now, you who say, "Today or tomorrow we will go into such and such a town and spend a year there and trade and make a profit" - yet you do not know what tomorrow will bring...Instead you ought to say, "If the Lord wills, we will live and do this or that."
- **We will work together.** Proverbs 15:22 - Without counsel plans fail, but with many advisers they succeed.

- **We will submit to governing authorities.** Romans 13:1 - Let everyone be subject to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except that which God has established. The authorities that exist have been established by God.
- **We will consider and care for one another and strive for Christian unity.** Ephesians 4:1–3 - I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.
- **We will trust God.** Proverbs 16:3 - Commit your work to the LORD, and your plans will be established.

Calendar

NCS will resume in-class instruction on campus on August 18, 2021 with no major changes to our calendar at this time.

Regular and Proactive Health Screening

In order to provide the safest learning environment for our students and staff, NCS will take a 2-tiered approach to health screening:

1. All students, staff, faculty, school volunteers, and visitors **MUST** self-screen for concerning health symptoms **BEFORE** leaving home each day to come to any NCS facilities. A person shall not come to school under any circumstances if he/she displays symptoms listed below.
2. As symptoms are recognized in students or staff during the school day, the individual will be immediately sent home or placed in a designated isolation area at school until they are taken home. It is required that parents make immediate arrangements to have their child picked up from school if they demonstrate symptoms listed below.

A student, staff or faculty member, school volunteer, or visitor must not come to school under any circumstances if he/she displays any one of the following symptoms*:

- A body temperature of 100.4°F or higher at any time within a 24 hour period
- New or worsened cough
- Shortness of breath
- Loss of taste or smell
- Sore throat
- Diarrhea or vomiting
- New onset severe headache

For children with chronic medical conditions (such as allergies, asthma or migraine), symptoms should represent a change from their usual health status. Children without any of the symptoms listed above who have non-specific symptoms such as congestion, runny nose, fatigue, or body aches should be kept at home if you suspect they may have an infection.

*per Franklin County Public Health, Columbus Public Health, and Nationwide Children’s Hospital’s Child Activity Algorithm document

Returning to School Following Symptoms and Sickness

- Students, staff or faculty members, school volunteers, or visitors must be clear of symptoms for a full 24 hours before returning to school.
- Students kept home from school by their parents must present evidence of clearance from a doctor **OR** provide a written note from a parent listing the last time that the symptom was evident before returning to school.
- If a student is **sent home from school** due to any of the symptoms listed above, the family **may** be asked to present evidence of clearance from a doctor before being permitted back to school.
- If a student, staff or faculty member or school volunteer tests positive for COVID-19, they must do the following before returning to school:
 - Remain away from school for at least 10 calendar days from the date of the positive test, AND
 - Remain fever-free for 72 hours without the aid of fever-reducing medication, AND
 - Demonstrate improved respiratory function, AND
 - Present evidence of clearance from a doctor.
- An unvaccinated student or staff member who has been exposed to an individual who was tested positive for COVID-19 must remain out of school for 14 days from the date of exposure or 7 days with a negative test at least 5 days after last exposure. They must present evidence of clearance from a doctor or Health Department before returning to school. Vaccinated students or staff will only quarantine if directed by the Health Department. **If an unvaccinated student is consistently masking, quarantines may be “in-person” with a mask.**

“Exposure” has been defined as being within 6’ of an infected person for more than 15 minutes.

The school nurse and/or principal have the authority to determine whether a student or staff person has been exposed while at school.

- NCS will communicate with the Columbus Public Health Department anytime a student or staff member has tested positive for COVID-19. NCS will then cooperate fully with their guidance.

Quarantine Guidelines

- [Guidelines for Classroom quarantine procedures from the Ohio Department of Health](#) (as of 8/5/21) indicate that if the entire school is wearing masks, social distancing, and following documented COVID-19 prevention policies, **individuals who are exposed can remain in a normal in-person classroom setting and participate in sports as long as**

they are symptom-free. This policy applies to the 5th-12th grades as long as our temporary mask requirement is in place.

- When masks are not required for everyone (K4-4th grades), quarantine guidelines are as follows:
 - If the exposed individual is **vaccinated**, OR has **consistently worn a mask**, OR has **recovered after a positive COVID-19 test within the last 90 days** ([per CDC recommendations](#)), the individual should **wear a mask indoors**, as much as possible, either for **14 days** or until receiving a **negative viral test**, at least 5 days after exposure. These individuals can remain in the normal in-person classroom and participate in sports **as long as they are symptom-free**.
 - If the exposed individual has NOT been vaccinated or recently recovered from COVID-19, and has not consistently worn a mask, the individual **should NOT attend in-person school NOR participate in sports activities**. The individual can return to the normal classroom and activities after 7 days if (s)he receives a negative viral test, at least 5 days after exposure.
- Students who are allowed to be in-person after exposure should report to school with a mask, even if there are other students at home participating in distance learning. The principal or school nurse will communicate the proper procedure after exposure for individual students. **Any student who does not come to school on a day when he or she is allowed will be considered absent without an excuse.** An excused absence will only be granted if the parents of the student have a legitimate health concern that is communicated to the principal or school nurse.

Special Assistance for Students Missing School

Our team will be developing processes to minimize the effects on student progress from missing an extended amount of school days due to sickness or preventative health measures. We have hired two new Student Support Advocates to assist students and families in these situations.

Physical Distancing

To reduce the risk of spreading germs and sickness, all classrooms at NCS will adhere to the following guidelines:

- Student seating will be spaced 3' apart from one another whenever possible.
- Whenever possible, the sharing of supplies among students will be avoided.
- Six feet of distancing between **unvaccinated** adults will be maintained when at all possible. Teachers will use common sense when determining appropriate distancing practices between themselves and their students.
- Cubbies and lockers will be spaced apart as much as possible.

- When applicable, and when necessary physical distancing is not achievable, students and/or teachers may be separated by Plexiglas dividers to reduce the spread of germs.

Consistent Hand Hygiene

Research shows that regular hand-washing and sanitizing is one of the most effective ways to control the spread of germs. NCS will ensure that students will have consistent access to soap and water, as well as alcohol-based hand sanitizers. To support students and staff in maintaining healthy hand hygiene, NCS will ensure:

- All classrooms and common spaces (including front office, cafetorium, gymnasium, computer lab, library, etc.) will be equipped with hand sanitizer stations. Staff and students will be expected to use hand sanitizer when entering and leaving those spaces.
- Soap dispensers (in the bathrooms and Elementary classrooms) will be regularly monitored for refilling.
- Students will be expected to wash their hands before and after lunch, before and after recess, and after using the restroom.
- NCS staff will regularly remind students to wash hands, as well as proper handwashing methods. Signs and other methods of communication will consistently remind students of the importance of healthy hand hygiene.

Face Coverings

K4-4th grade students will NOT be required to wear a face covering. We are temporarily requiring face coverings for grades 5-12, and any adult interacting with those grades. The CDC and ODH have recommended face coverings for unvaccinated individuals, which includes every student under age 12. We will accommodate and support any family who wishes to send children to school with face coverings. We will work to remind students who are sent with a mask to wear it properly. The school board may temporarily reinstate a face covering requirement for K5-4th grade, if they deem necessary. The following policies will apply to masks:

- Students will be permitted to wear a fabric face covering or a face shield.
- Teachers will be permitted to wear a mask, face shield, or teach behind a Plexiglas barrier to best accommodate student learning.
- Face coverings or masks should cover the mouth and nose.
- Families should provide their students with their own face coverings, although we will have some on hand to replace lost or soiled masks.

- Students sent to school with a mask (or required to wear a mask at school) will be allowed to remove it and take breaks throughout the day. The following scenarios provide provisions for the removal of masks:
 - When students are actively participating in recess or physical activity (i.e. PE class) where they are not congregating.
 - When students are seated and actively consuming food or beverage.
 - Teachers will permit mask breaks in the classroom when students are seated and distanced from others.

Cleaning and Sanitizing of NCS Facilities

In order to reduce the risk of spreading germs and to provide the safest possible learning environment for students and staff, NCS will ensure that:

- NCS facilities are cleaned and sanitized regularly. Disinfectants labeled for use against SARS-CoV-2 will be used on surfaces. High touch surfaces such as door handles, desks, and shared materials will be cleaned more frequently.
- All classrooms will be supplied with disinfectant cleaning supplies. Classrooms will be disinfected throughout the day as necessary.
- The health office and front office will be disinfected following every sick visit.

Pick-Up and Drop-Off Procedures

In order to provide the safest learning environment for staff and students, the following pick-up and drop-off procedures will be implemented:

- NCS will open doors to students at 7:30 am for arrival.
- A parent should check each student's temperature before they leave home. **If a fever is detected, the student will not be permitted to attend classes that day.**
- For Pre-K and Kindergarten students, parents will **NOT** come into the building to drop them off. There will be no sign-in sheet this year. Students will exit the vehicle and be directed to where they should go.
- Unless students are staying for our Latchkey Program (grades K4-5), we ask that all students depart from the building by **4:00 pm** to limit the number of people who are in the building. If this is not possible, please make special arrangements with the front office so that we know who is in the building after the school day has ended.
- All parents must remain in their vehicles as they wait for their child at the end of the day. Students will come to you.

Chapel and Assemblies

- We believe that Chapel programming is an integral part of our mission and discipleship priority. Because of that, we will plan to hold regular Chapel services with appropriate distancing between students, teachers, and the chapel speaker.
- Other large group assemblies will be limited as much as possible, or special considerations made, to ensure that we are seeking to avoid large group gatherings.

Recess

NCS believes that purposeful play is an integral aspect of a child's healthy development. Because of this, and understanding much research that communicates that the risk of viral spread is significantly lower outdoors, we will seek to keep recess as normal as possible for students. However, to keep students healthy and active, NCS will ensure that:

- Recess will be outside whenever possible (weather-permitting).
- Teachers will enforce a no-hands policy – keeping students from putting their hands on one another.
- Students will be required to wash or sanitize their hands before and after each recess.
- Playground equipment and toys will be regularly sanitized.
- When possible, recess will be limited to no more than 2-3 classes at a time.

Lunch

- Student lunch tables will be spaced around the lunchroom, permitting no more than 8 students per table (2 students per 6' bench). Students will also be seated so that they will not be eating directly across the table from another person.
- Outside lunch seating will be made available for Middle and High School students (weather-permitting).
- Lunch tables will be disinfected following every lunch rotation.
- Microwaves **will** be available to students for heating food for lunch and will be disinfected regularly.

Afternoon Latchkey Program

NCS will plan to continue Latchkey care for students in grades K4-5. In order to provide a safe environment for your child, NCS will ensure that:

- The number of toys that students may play with will be limited and thoroughly sanitized after play.
- All touched surfaces will be sanitized before and after latchkey.
- Students will be required to wash or sanitize their hands before and after snack and playing outside.
- Latchkey students will play outside as much as possible (weather-permitting).
- Signing out latchkey students will be done either just inside the Cafetorium doors (facing the front circle) or on the playground. Adults may not enter the building during Latchkey except through the Cafetorium entrance.

Music and Choir

Music education is an essential distinctive of the NCS experience. We greatly desire to provide music and choral instruction and, eventually, performances.

- Singing periods will be limited to 30 minutes.
- Students in grades 5-12 will be required to wear a face covering in choir/music class as long as the temporary mask requirement is in place.
- The annual high school fine arts contest at Bob Jones University will be an in-person event this year. More details about our participation will be released after school begins.

Athletics

The following NCS athletics Policy for Fall Sports provides guidance for Coaches, Athletes and Staff who participate in NCS fall season sports (Soccer and Volleyball). This policy is based on Ohio Department of Health, OHSAA Return To Play Guidance, and the NCS Back to School Plan.

OHSAA is going forward with all 10 regular Fall Sports Seasons and State Tournaments. At this time NCS has scheduled a full slate of Middle School and Junior Varsity/Varsity Soccer and Volleyball games. Due to some uncertainty as to COVID-19 impacts and the usual seasonal “turmoil”, the current schedule is subject to change.

Regular and Proactive Health Screening

In order to provide the safest practice environment for our athletes and staff:

1. All coaches and athletes MUST self-screen for concerning health symptoms BEFORE attending practices or games.
2. As symptoms are recognized in students or staff during practices or games, the individual will be immediately sent home or placed in a designated isolation area at school until they are taken home.

A Coach or Athlete shall not come to games or practices under any circumstances if he/she displays any ONE the following symptoms:

- A body temperature of 100°F or higher at any time within a 24 hour period
- Persistent cough
- Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing
- Nausea, vomiting, or diarrhea
- Chills
- Loss of taste or smell

Or, any TWO of the following:

- Body ache
- Headache
- Sore throat
- Runny nose or congestion

[Returning to Practice/Competition Following Symptoms and Sickness](#)

Eligibility to participate in practices and games is dependent on a student attending school on the day of practice and/or games. An athlete that misses the school day for ANY reason is not eligible to participate THAT day. If an athlete is absent or sent home due to symptoms and/or sickness, he/she must meet the guidance set forth in “Returning to School Following Symptoms and Sickness” section (above) of this document.

[Practices and Games](#)

Based on guidance from the State of Ohio and the NCS School Policy, NCS Athletics will follow these guidelines for our Fall Season:

- Symptoms checks and fever screening must be conducted by parents prior to each event.
- Whenever possible, maintain 6 ft. social distancing before, during and after all events.
- **Facial coverings are required while not actively participating in the game or practice.**
- “No Touch” rule is in effect – avoid contact with others (high fives, huddles, etc) before, during and after events.
- Athletes should provide their own personal water/beverages. Avoid sharing of beverages, snacks, etc.
- Equipment and items related will be sanitized before, during and after any event.

- Locker rooms will be cleaned and sanitized after each use. Showers will be unavailable for use.
- Coaches and athletes are encouraged to use hand sanitizer before, during and after events.
- Practice and Game uniforms should be washed after each use.

Participants and Spectators

- It is recommended that spectators maintain six-foot social distancing from people outside your home whenever possible.
- No touch rule is in effect. All individuals must avoid physical contact with others including high fives, huddles, or other close contact occurring before, during, and after the events.

