

RETURN-TO-SCHOOL PLAN

IN RESPONSE TO COVID-19

St. Thomas Aquinas High School

School Reopening Taskforce

Sr. Donna Marie Trukowski, President
Mr. Harry Ziegler, Principal
Mr. Mark Fiore, Vice Principal
Mr. Karl Zrno, Technology Director
Ms. Laura Veni, Director of Admissions
Mr. Joseph Prosdocimo, Community Member
Ms. Elaine O’Leary, Parent
Mr. Michael Kowalczyk, Teacher
Ms. Cindy Milz, School Nurse

INTRODUCTION

We have created this plan to aid in navigating the reestablishment of our school to ensure employees, students, and families feel safe and to reduce the impact of COVID-19 conditions upon returning to the school. The guidelines referenced in this plan are based on guidance from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), World Health Organization (WHO), the Edison Board of Health, and the State of New Jersey Department of Education (NJDOE). Please note that STA’s president and principal may change or update the plan based on school needs and information provided by the CDC, WHO, and applicable federal, state and local agencies.

Please forward any questions about STA safety procedures to Mr. Mark Fiore, vice principal (mfiore@stahs.net).

SOURCES

Center for Disease Control: https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/schools-childcare/schools.html#anchor_1589931942037

New Jersey Department of Education:
<https://www.nj.gov/education/reopening/NJDOETheRoadBack.pdf>

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

In order to ensure the continued well-being of our employees and students the following guiding principles have been put in place:

1. EMPLOYEE AND STUDENT SAFETY MEASURES
2. HEALTH GUIDELINES

PHASES AND TIMELINES

Information and direction about the phases and timeline will be sent to all employees and parents before implementation. Please see below for a summary of the phases and timelines.

Phase	Timing	Items
Planning	July	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supplies, equipment • Prepare detailed work schedule for phases • Prepare building and transportation for reopen with thorough cleaning
Phase 1	August	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implement social distancing protocol and open facilities with limited access/use
Phase 2	August	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expand use of school based on recommendations and data from CDC, NJDOH, New Jersey Governor, and applicable state and local agencies
Phase 3	September	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Open school • Expand full operation based on recommendations and data from CDC, NJDOH, New Jersey Governor, and applicable local and state agencies • Determine what restrictions/guidelines stay in place

HEALTH PROTOCOL AND SCREENINGS (EMPLOYEE AND STUDENT)

A screening should be completed by the child’s parent/guardian prior to arriving at school each day.

COVID-19 symptoms include:

- Cough
- Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing
- Chills
- Repeated shaking with chills
- Muscle pain
- Headache
- Sore throat
- Loss of taste or smell
- Diarrhea
- Feeling feverish or a measured temperature greater than or equal to 100.0 degrees Fahrenheit
- Known close contact with a person who is lab confirmed to have COVID-19

Employees:

School staff are required to wear face coverings unless doing so would inhibit the individual's health.

- If an employee becomes ill at work or if another person is exhibiting symptoms of COVID19 at work, they will be asked to leave work and go home or to the nearest health center.
- Employees returning to work from an approved medical leave will be asked to submit a healthcare provider's note before returning to work.
- If an employee has been diagnosed with COVID19, the school, Office of Schools, and local health department must be contacted. The health department will determine the next steps.
- All school employees are required to show proof of COVID vaccination or must undergo weekly testing.

Students:

- Parents are encouraged to be on the alert for signs of illness in their children and to keep them home when they are sick.
- Based on the state's mandate, students are required to wear face coverings, unless doing so would inhibit the student's health in which case, a Dr. note would be needed. Mandatory use of face masks includes but is not limited to change of class, use of restrooms, arriving and departing from school and riding on buses. It is also necessary to acknowledge that enforcing the use of face coverings may be impractical for individuals with disabilities.
- Student health checks must be conducted safely and respectfully, and in accordance with any applicable privacy laws and regulations.
- Results must be documented when signs/symptoms of COVID-19 are observed.

- Any screening policy must take into account students with disabilities and accommodations that may be needed in the screening process for those students.

Protocol for Symptomatic Staff and Students

Procedures will include the following:

- Students and staff with symptoms related to COVID-19 will be safely and respectfully isolated from others.
- Students will remain in isolation with continued supervision and care until picked up by an authorized adult.
- There will be continuous monitoring of symptoms
- STA will follow current State of New Jersey Communicable Disease Service guidance for illness reporting - <https://www.nj.gov/health/>
- If the school becomes aware that an individual who has spent time in the school tests positive for COVID-19, school officials must immediately notify local health officials, staff, and families of a confirmed case while maintaining confidentiality.
- Adequate amount of personal protective equipment (PPE) will be available, accessible, and provided for use.

If an employee or student becomes ill on campus, he/she will immediately report to the **nurse's isolation room** and the case form will be completed.

Once the employee or student arrives at the isolation room, they will immediately be provided with a mask and gloves. This is to help protect other employees and students and prevent the spread of the potential virus.

- The nurse must call the local health authority and seek advice regarding transportation and location.
- The nurse and others attending the suspected infected person should also wear a protective mask and gloves while working with the suspected infected person.
- The nurse will direct the ill employee to leave work or call the parent of the student to be picked up and go home.
- The nurse and principal must identify persons who may have come in contact with the suspected infected person. *Unless required by the local health authority, the name of the employee should not be provided.*
- Employees will be advised that they may have been in contact with a suspected employee and to carry out self-screening every morning, and based on the results, contact the HR department.
- The isolation area and suspected employee's or student's work area/classroom must be thoroughly cleaned and disinfected, in addition to all other common surfaces recently touched by the employee or student.

When an individual tests positive for COVID-19, STA will immediately notify local health officials, staff and families of a possible or confirmed case while maintaining confidentiality.

STA will provide the following information when consulting public health:

- The identity of the person with COVID-19 or probable COVID-19 (i.e. staff, child in care, household contact).
- The date the person with COVID-19 or probable COVID-19 was last in the building
- The date the person developed symptoms.
- Types of interactions the person may have had with other persons in the building or in other locations.
- How long their interactions were with other persons in the building.
- If other persons in the childcare program have developed any symptoms; and
- Any other information to assist with the determination of next steps.

Re-admittance Procedures After Recovery From COVID:

The school administration will work with the school nurse and Edison Department of Health to establish protocol for the re-admittance of students and employees to school after recovering from COVID-19.

SOCIAL DISTANCING

Social distancing is an effective way to prevent potential infection. STA employees, students, and parents should practice staying approximately 3 feet away from others and eliminating contact with others.

- The school will require social distancing within the classroom to the maximum extent practicable. This will be achieved by ensuring students are seated at least 3 feet apart and considering the flow of student traffic around the room. Social distancing guidance will support a 1.5-foot radius around each student desk (from the center), resulting in a 3 foot total distance between any two students.
- If schools are not able to maintain this physical distance, physical barriers will be installed between desks and additional modifications should be in place. These include using physical barriers between desks and turning desks to face the same direction (rather than facing each other).
- When weather allows, windows should be opened to allow for greater air circulation. Indoor environments with re-circulated air are the riskiest of environments for COVID-19 spread.
- Ad-hoc Interactions/Gatherings – Non-essential/informal meetings and visiting should be avoided if possible

PERSONAL PROTECTIVE EQUIPMENT (PPE)

In order to minimize exposure to COVID-19, PPE may be needed to prevent certain exposures. PPE can include:

Masks: Face masks are an important part of employee protection, as well as personal hygiene, social distancing, and frequent cleaning efforts.

School staff and students are required to wear face coverings unless doing so would inhibit the individual's health in which case a Dr. note is needed. It is necessary to acknowledge that enforcing the use of face coverings may be impractical for individuals with disabilities,

Gloves: Touching your face with contaminated hands, whether gloved or not, poses a significant risk of infection. Wearing gloves does not diminish the need to wash your hands. Employees and students will be reminded to wash their hands properly as it is the number-one defense against any virus. Additionally, the proper removal of gloves reduces the risk of being exposed to contamination.

Please note that social distancing should still be practiced even with the use of gloves and masks.

In addition to using PPE, employees and students will be reminded to:

- Wash their hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. Use hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol if soap and water are not available
- Avoid touching their eyes, nose, and mouth
- Cover their mouth and nose with a tissue when they cough or sneeze or use the inside of their elbow

CLASSROOM AND COMMON SPACES

Employees are expected to disinfect their own personal workspace (teacher desk, phone, etc.) throughout the day, giving special attention to commonly touched surfaces.

Classrooms:

- There should be a 3 foot separation of desks and students. If the 3 foot separation is not feasible (considering the size of the room and number of students per class), desk sneeze guards will be installed at desks. Desks will face in the same direction (rather than facing each other).
- Under the supervision of the teacher, desks will be cleaned between sittings by student leaving and student coming in. Dispensers will be available in the classrooms.

- Larger rooms (i.e. auditorium, cafeteria, gym) can be used as classrooms to allow for social distancing.
- There will be minimal mixing between groups/cohorts.
- Outdoor classes will be allowed when seasonally appropriate.
- Hand sanitizer will be available in every classroom, in accordance with CDC guidelines.

School Entrances, hallways, and common spaces:

- STA will provide physical guides, such as signs on walls to help ensure that staff and students remain at least 3 feet apart in lines and at other times.
- Interaction of students between drop-off and entrance to school will be minimized.
- Social distancing will be enforced in hallways and common areas.
- Large group gatherings will be minimized.
- Hand sanitizer will be provided at school entrances.
- Signage will be placed around the school building to provide hygiene advice and reminders.
- There will be increased frequency of cleaning all surfaces.
- Physical barriers, such as sneeze guards, will be installed in areas where it is difficult for individuals to remain at least 3 feet apart.
- Locker access will be limited to keep traffic in the hallways within social distancing protocols.
- Students can carry backpacks to limit locker use.

Other Considerations:

- There will be increased circulation of outdoor air as much as possible, for example, by opening windows and doors.

FACILITIES CLEANING

The safety of our employees and students are our first priority. Upon reopening, our school has been completely cleaned and disinfected and we will continue to adhere to all necessary safety precautions. In addition to the deep clean of the office and school before employees and students return, the cleaning steps outlined below are to be taken to disinfect workplace surfaces, chairs, tables, etc. to protect employees and reduce the risk of spread of infection. We will require employees to maintain this safety standard by continuously cleaning and disinfecting based on the frequency stated below. Deep cleaning is triggered when an active employee or student is identified as positive for COVID 19 based on testing.

GENERAL DISINFECTION MEASURES

Category	Area	Frequency
Workspaces	Classrooms, Offices	At the end of each use/day
Appliances	Refrigerators, Microwaves, Coffee Machines	Daily
Electronic Equipment	Copier machines, Shared computer monitors, TV's, Telephones, keyboards	At the end of each use/day and/or between use
General Used Objects	Handles, light switches, sinks, restrooms	Several times a day
Buses	Bus seats, handles/railing, belts, window controls	At the end of each use/day
Common Areas	Cafeteria, Library, Conference rooms, Gyms, Common Areas	At the end of each use/day; between groups

STA will prepare and maintain hand sanitizing stations with alcohol-based hand sanitizers (at least 60% alcohol), which will be available:

- In each classroom.
- At entrances and exits of buildings.
- Near lunchrooms and toilets.
- Students should wash hands for at least 20 seconds at regular intervals, including before eating, after using the bathroom, and after blowing their nose/coughing/sneezing.
- STA will provide alcohol-based hand sanitizer (at least 60% alcohol) if washing with soap and water is not possible.

In limited cases, hand hygiene with an alcohol-based sanitizer or alcohol-based wipes, when there is no visible soiling of hands, are alternatives to hand washing with soap and water. The CDC recommends an alcohol-based sanitizer that is at least 60% alcohol and to rub the product over all surfaces of your hands and fingers until your hands are dry, about 20 seconds, then wash hands with soap and water as soon as possible.

SIGNAGE

Signage will be placed throughout the offices and school.



BUS DRIVERS/BUS PROTOCOLS

STA will follow the protocols outlined by the local district providing busing. For the school's own buses, bus drivers or custodial staff will disinfect the buses at a minimum:

1. Right before starting a route to pick up students
2. Right after the morning and afternoon routes

Bus drivers must not report to work if they suspect they are sick or if they have symptoms such as fever or difficulty breathing, or have been in contact with other people who have any confirmed respiratory illness or disease the last 7 days.

RESTROOM USAGE DURING THE SCHOOL DAY

The school will establish maximum capacity for the facility that allows for social distancing. The school will post the maximum capacity sign on the door. There will be limited shared use of restrooms.

VISITORS ON CAMPUS

Until further notice there will be no visitors allowed in the school building without permission or for a planned meeting. Fewer people entering the school building allows for greater implementation of safety measures.

The school receptionist will accept packages or other items at the school entrance.

CAFETERIA AND MEAL PERIODS

The school will continue to provide students with the opportunity to purchase lunch through our food service provider, RPM Dining Services. Students will eat in the cafeteria, following social distancing guidelines, and will clean up after their meal.

- The school will stagger times to allow for social distancing, and clean and disinfect between groups.
- Tables will be cleaned and sanitized between each meal service, pursuant to the protocols outlined here by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA).
- Students will sit at least three feet apart.
- RPM will serve individually plated meals or meals in pre-packaged boxes or bags.
- Students will only be able to purchase lunch with cash. There is no card service currently.
- Students will use disposable food service items (e.g., utensils, dishes).
- If disposable items are not available, all non-disposable food service items will be handled with gloves and washed with dish soap and hot water or in a dishwasher. Proper hand washing will be encouraged before and after eating meals.
- Microwaves will not be available in the cafeteria

TRAVEL

- There is currently no mandatory quarantine for travel to any state in the U.S.
- Any student who travels outside the U.S. must have a covid test upon return to the country.

COMMUNICATION WITH FAMILIES

To stay updated on the most current information, parents, students and teachers will be informed through the following resources:

1. E-mail alerts
2. School website (www.stahs.net)
3. STA Twitter and Instagram
4. PowerSchool Student Information System
5. School Messenger System

ACADEMICS AND HOME-BASED LEARNING

Temporary remote learning will be available for students if the school confirms they are advised to quarantine according to public health guidelines or if they test positive for COVID-19.

Temporary remote learning will not be available for any reason other than close contact or a positive COVID-19 test. Students who are out sick with COVID-19 symptoms but do not yet have test results will not have access to live remote learning. Temporary live remote learning will also not be available for students who are home sick for non-COVID reasons, for students who travel, or for any other reason.

CATHOLIC IDENTITY

At St. Thomas Aquinas High School, we are committed to continually forming our students into disciples of Jesus Christ. Whether in person or virtually, the Campus Ministry Team is committed to providing formative and meaningful faith experiences for students, faculty and staff. In addition to our morning prayer, offered daily in person or online, our department will provide additional opportunities for students to grow in their faith. Virtual retreats and nights of reflection online will allow students to deepen their relationship with Christ from the safety of their home. Though service opportunities may not be available in their previous form, our department stands committed to students living out the corporal and spiritual works of mercy. Letter writing campaigns to the Felician Sisters Care Center and our Aquinas Star Rocco will allow our students to make an impact on the lives of those around them. With Christ as our model, we stand committed to accompanying our students on their faith journey.

GRADING AND ATTENDANCE POLICY

To receive credit for the courses for this school year students are expected to complete the assignments. The grading policy is located in the school handbook.

In the event that the school has to close in 2021-2022, we will follow specific guidelines for receiving and returning student work, which will be outlined in a separate document on Virtual Learning.

EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES/BEFORE AND AFTERCARE PROGRAMS

Extracurricular activities will adhere to the following guidelines:

- Adhere to all applicable social distancing requirements and hygiene protocol during any extracurricular activities.
- Maximize the use of technology and online resources to continue some extra-curricular activities without additional person-to-person contact.
- Restrict use of school facilities to school-sponsored extracurricular activities and groups.
- At times, cleaning/disinfecting schedules may not allow for in-person gatherings outside school hours.