



PROVIDENCE CATHOLIC HIGH SCHOOL

1800 W. Lincoln Highway • New Lenox, Illinois 60451 • (815) 485-2136 • www.providencecatholic.org

March 16, 2021

Dear Providence Catholic Parents,

Last week, the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) and the Illinois Department of Public Health (IDPH) published revised public health guidelines for schools. The administration is studying these revisions to determine if a return to full-time in-person learning this spring is possible and prudent. We would like to communicate requirements still in effect, as well as some important changes. At the end of this letter is a link to a parent survey asking for your input.

The ISBE/IDPH maintained and reiterated, all schools must continue to follow five essential mitigation strategies:

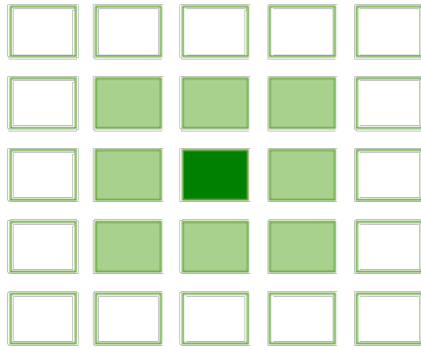
1. Require universal and correct use of appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE), including face mask.
2. Require 3-6 feet social distancing in classrooms; 6-foot social distancing in lunch areas.
3. Require contact tracing in combination with isolation of those with suspected or confirmed COVID-19 and quarantine of close contacts, in collaboration with the local health department.
4. Require an increase in schoolwide cleaning and disinfection and maintenance of healthy environments; and
5. Require promotion and adherence to handwashing and respiratory etiquette.

The ISBE/IDPH also revised certain other prominent COVID-19 school guidelines that are important to mention:

Capacity Limits for Non-Academic Activities: Capacity limits for non-academic school hour activities such as lunch, are now determined “by the space’s ability to accommodate social distancing, and not a set capacity limit number or percentage.” Up until now, we have only been able to seat up to 50 students, spaced 6 feet apart, in the Brown Student Commons for lunch despite the fact that the capacity is much larger. This caused us to rely upon alternative sites for student lunches, including the small gymnasium and the former cafeteria. As a result of this revised guideline, we can now seat all students safely in the Commons during lunch periods.

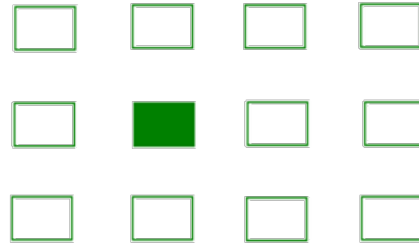
Classroom Social Distancing: The social distance requirement for classrooms has been revised to “3 to 6 feet for students and fully vaccinated staff.” The IDPH goes on to emphasize that 6 feet remains the safest distance, but schools can operate at no less than 3 feet in order to provide in-person instruction. Families of students who are at an increased risk of severe illness are still given the option of remote instruction despite the social distance revision.

However, it is important to note, that **the 6 ft. close contact requirement has not been revised.** Anyone within 6 ft. of an individual who tested positive for COVID-19 for a cumulative period of 15 minutes over 24 hours, is considered in close contact and must quarantine for 10 days. Currently, if a PCHS student tests positive for COVID-19, due to the 6 ft. social distancing in all classrooms, only that student who tested positive is required to quarantine. If desks are moved to 3 ft., the school will need to "involuntarily quarantine" students for 10 days because they would now be within the 6 ft. radius. See picture below.



Seating with 3 ft. of distance; potential 8 students in each class period involuntarily quarantined for 10 days.

Green = COVID-19+ student; Light green = student who will need to quarantine according to IDPH "close contact" guidelines.



Seating with 6 ft. of distance; potential 0 students involuntarily quarantined for 10 days because on one is a "close contact" according to IDPH guidelines.

Green = COVID-19+ student

Our Maintenance staff has been measuring the capacity of each classroom to determine how many desks, spaced 3 feet apart, can fit in each room. Our Counseling Department intends to take this data and compare it with class enrollment numbers to determine if all, or some students could possibly return to full-time in-person instruction this spring.

The Administration has also taken the time to survey our faculty and staff who gave very thoughtful insight into this process. We all know it is best for our students to be in school learning. We also know that we are still in the middle of a pandemic and coming back too soon potentially exposes more students, faculty and staff to COVID-19. This may jeopardize student participation in extra-curriculars and athletics and may force us into remote learning for an extended period of time.

Over the next week, the administration and faculty will continue our examination of these revised guidelines and their applicability to our school. As part of this process, we are now asking for your help. Please click on the link below to submit your input via our parent survey by **Friday, March 19th**. The information gleaned from this survey will help us in our decision-making process.

[Parent Survey](#)

Please keep us in your prayers!

Fr. Merk

Dr. Harper