



## **School Reopening Plan 2020-2021**

## **Background and Introduction:**

Last spring, GGCA developed a remote learning platform for its students, with great urgency and care, in response to the unprecedented impact of the coronavirus pandemic. As we continue to adjust to this ever-changing landscape, our primary focus is on your student's overall development and well-being. As a Christian school, we recognize your student is fearfully and wonderfully created by God with a body, soul, and spirit. While many resources are used to determine what constitutes a safe environment for students returning to school, we found that they only take into account the physical health of a student. At GGCA, we believe that there are many more factors to consider and we can not ignore the mental, emotional and spiritual well-being of the whole child.

GGCA assembled a committee of stakeholders to look at the most compelling aspects of reopening its school in a safe way to students for the 2020-21 academic year. This committee is composed of parents, teachers, administrators, members of the medical management field, as well as the leadership of GGWO. We have met to discuss the various aspects and challenges of educating children in the current COVID-19 context. We have spent a great deal of time surveying and absorbing a wide range of information from reliable organizations such as the CDC (Center for Disease Control), The American Academy of Pediatrics, Johns Hopkins University, and others. In addition, we have reviewed reopening plans from other schools. The American Academy of Pediatrics recently stated, "all policy considerations for the coming school year should start with a goal of having students physically present in school."\*

While we recognize it may not be possible to meet every family's expectations. We have sought God's mind and guidance. We have looked into the best available information and recommendations to provide our GGCA students and families with a safe school environment. We feel the most beneficial way forward as a school community is to be exercised in the Ephesians 4:3 principle of endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. We would ask that communications and concerns be directed towards the administration. Greater Grace Christian Academy's plan for the 2020-21 academic year has taken into account what we have learned at this point in time, and therefore, may be subject to change.

GGCA is a ministry of Greater Grace World Outreach (GGWO), and is a non-public, "church-exempt" school in the state of Maryland. As such, we have the liberty to make our own decisions regarding curriculum, instructional methodology, and how we will reopen. Additionally the layout and configuration of our physical school plant put us in the unique position of being able to have school with ample provision for precautions and physical spacing.

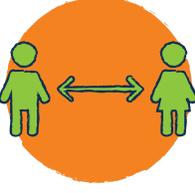
Our committee's mission is to set forth a plan for reopening that is reasonable and responsible. While some aspects of school functioning are yet to be worked out, the following information addresses the trajectory of our reopening plans and how we intend to mitigate the spread of COVID-19 on our campus.

## **GGCA's Reopening Plan**

**GGCA plans to reopen its campus and buildings to all students, five days per week, for in-person classroom instruction, employing a "healthy student" model, with a plan of action to mitigate the spread of COVID-19.**

During the course of a typical student's day at GGCA, he/she will spend the greatest amount of time with the classmates in their grade and with their teacher. As a result, we view that group of community members somewhat like a family unit.\* The CDC refers to this as cohorting. They will avoid sharing items whenever possible, sanitize items as needed, and socially distance whenever possible. Within the school community these "families" will interact with one another in ways that allow for the preservation of a respectful, relational school environment, while we exercise wisdom and discernment in the pursuit of protecting our children to the greatest extent possible.

## GGCA's Plan of Action to Help Mitigate the Spread of COVID-19

<p><b>Temperature-Taking</b></p> 	<p>Any student or staff member with a temperature of <b>100.4 or higher</b> will not be permitted to enter or remain at school.</p>
<p><b>Face Coverings</b></p> 	<p>Face coverings will be required when students enter the school and when social distancing is not possible. The wearing of a face covering is only effective if it is covering both the nose and mouth.</p>
<p><b>Social Distancing</b></p> 	<p>GGCA's campus has the benefit of oversized classrooms and small class sizes and we will take full advantage of that by spreading out seating in classrooms and by limiting group interaction within 4 zones according to grades: K-2, 3-5, 6-8, 9-12.</p>
<p><b>Cleaning &amp; Disinfecting</b></p> 	<p>Frequent hand washing and increased sanitizing will be part of the daily culture of our school for students and staff members.</p>
<p><b>Family Responsibility</b></p> 	<p>Parents will be expected to help us maintain a healthy student body by keeping sick children home in order to prevent others from becoming sick.</p>

## 1) Temperature-Taking:

Upon arrival at the designated entry points to GGCA, teachers will utilize external temperature-taking devices so that we can monitor student temperatures. **Any student or staff member with a temperature of 100.4 or higher will not be permitted to enter or remain at school.** We ask that parents join us in the effort to carefully monitor temperatures by checking them at home before sending your child(ren) to school.

- **Lower Elementary Grades K-2**  
Kindergarten and first grade classes will enter directly into their classroom from the sidewalk. Second grade will use the main entrance to the lower elementary.
- **Upper Elementary Grades 3-5**  
Third grade will enter directly into their classroom from the sidewalk.  
Fourth grade will use the main entrance to the upper elementary.  
Fifth grade will use an entry/exit door in the back of the classroom.
- **Middle School Grades 6-8** will utilize the main reception entry/exit door.
- **High School Grades 9-12** will utilize the other entry/exit door into the Family Center from the sidewalk to the right of the main entrance.

## 2) Face Coverings:

Face coverings will be required when students enter the school and when social distancing is not possible. The wearing of a face covering is only effective if it is covering both the nose and mouth.

- Masks should be solid color, preferably black, white, or gray, in keeping with GGCA's dress code. If interested, face masks can be purchased from Land's End with the GGCA logo.
- When seated and distanced for instruction in class, face coverings will be optional for students and teachers. Teachers should remind students each time they enter and exit the classroom when a mask is required or can be removed.
- In contexts where students will be not distanced (changing classes, restroom use during breaks, etc.) students and staff members will be expected to wear face coverings.
- In some cases, for documented medical reasons, there may be individuals who are unable to wear face coverings. Any exceptions to face covering expectations must be vetted through school administration.

### 3) Social Distancing:

GGCA will seek to implement social distancing as much as possible. GGCA's campus has the benefit of oversized classrooms and small class sizes, and we will take full advantage of that.

- We will spread seating/desks apart in every classroom and attempt to organize them in a way that students will face forward, rather than toward each other, when possible.
- In addition, we intend to take advantage of the **4 separate zones** that already exist in the configuration of the spaces on our campus. To that end, we will be reducing contact opportunities between classes. Keeping students with their own class throughout the day will limit possible exposure.
- - Zone 1:** Lower Elementary Grades K-2
  - Zone 2:** Upper Elementary Grades 3-5
  - Zone 3:** Middle School Grades 6-8
  - Zone 4:** High School Grades 9-12
- Efforts will be made to minimize cross-over traffic during the school day. We will stagger times when students share the lunch room, chapel, hallways, and playground. Plans are underway to address these circumstances.
- When the weather is favorable, teachers are encouraged to take advantage of outdoor spaces.
- To begin the school year and until change notice is provided, GGCA will limit parent and visitor traffic into the buildings. **Parents will not be allowed in classrooms**, but will be allowed into the school for scheduled appointments with a mask and after a temperature check is completed upon entry by the secretary.

**Lunchtime:** Hand washing/sanitizing before and after lunch will be an expectation for all students. There will be a designated staff person responsible for sanitizing the lunchroom before, during and after each period. GGCA may institute a modified schedule for lunch periods so that the number of students in the lunchroom at one time will be reduced.

- We will implement social distancing among grades at designated tables during each lunch period. Every grade will be assigned a number of tables to allow for distancing at their tables and within the lunch room.
- Vending machines and water fountains will remain available for student use and are considered a high contact surface which will be sanitized frequently during every lunch period.

#### **4) Cleaning and Disinfecting:**

- **Hand washing** and frequent sanitizing will be part of the daily culture of our school for students and staff members.
- Common areas including the lobby, lunchroom, and restrooms, and other high contact areas will be cleaned and sanitized by janitorial staff three times daily. Further information available upon request.
- All classrooms will be equipped with hand sanitizer, disinfectant spray, wipes, and paper towels.
- Hand sanitizing stations will be accessible throughout the buildings, outside classrooms and especially in high traffic areas.

#### **5) Family Responsibility**

##### **Attendance:**

During the span of the COVID-19 threat, we are counting on parents to be vigilant regarding the health of each family member and hope their decisions to keep their children home when sick, will prevent others from becoming sick. This is an integral part of our “healthy student” reopening plan.

In turn, GGCA will be reasonable regarding attendance policies. However, it is our hope that a more lenient policy will not be construed as an excuse for excessive absences. In the event the student is absent for more than 10 days, we will ask for a doctor’s note when they return and will consider excessive absences on a case by case basis. Please see the GGCA student handbook for the full attendance policy.

COVID-19 affects different people in different ways. Infected people have had a wide range of symptoms reported – from mild symptoms to severe illness. Symptoms may appear 2-14 days after exposure to the virus. People with these symptoms may have COVID-19. Having said that, we are relying on the integrity of each parent to keep their student(s) home if they or a member of their household exhibit any of the following symptoms:

- Fever or chills
- Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing
- Fatigue
- Muscle or body aches
- New loss of taste or smell

***Parents observing any of these symptoms in their children SHOULD NOT send them to school.***

If any of these symptoms are observed at school, a teacher or member of the administrative staff will evaluate the student to determine if he/she should remain at school. Reasonable consideration will be given for seasonal allergies and other non-COVID-related health conditions. If a student is not permitted to remain at school, return-to-school criteria must be met before the student returns.

- Students must be free from fever without medication for at least 48 hours without the use of fever reducing medication, (i. e. Tylenol, Advil, Aspirin, etc.)
- Students should not exhibit any potential COVID-19 symptoms for 48 hours.

**Communication:**

If COVID-19 is confirmed within our school community, we will let you know in a timely manner. We have developed internal guidelines that will direct our decision-making regarding whether we close our school in part or entirely, in response to potential exposure or a confirmed case of COVID-19 within our school community. We will consider options such as: remaining open with heightened vigilance, quarantining a class, a zone, a building, or the entire school population; in which case remote learning would take effect.

Any parent who suspects that they or any family member has COVID-19 or COVID-19 like symptoms, should seek medical attention to determine their course of action. If your student is sick, keep them home. **A quarantine period of 14 days should be observed if your student has been exposed to a person who has tested positive.**

Any staff member or student who tests positive for COVID-19 must **stay home for at least 10 days after the onset of symptoms** and be **symptom free for 48 hours without the aid of medication or fever reducers before returning to school.**

If a COVID-19 test DOES NOT affirm COVID-19 infection, the student must still meet the return-to-school criteria before re-entry (i.e. person must be symptom free without the aid of medication or fever reducers for 48 hours).

Our goal is to keep families informed of confirmed COVID-19 occurrences within our school community while observing the privacy of each family.

## **Additional Information:**

### **Special Events:**

There are a host of special events that will each be evaluated as we approach the scheduled dates. These include events and field trips: such as Parent's Back-to-School Night, Harvest Night, Senior Retreat to Camp Pecometh, etc. Event cancellations or revisions will be communicated in advance.

### **Specials: Art, Music, Band, Instrument Lessons:**

Fine arts activities are a vital part of our curriculum and reasonable mitigation strategies will be implemented.

### **Computers:**

Classes taking place in the computer lab will also continue as a vital aspect of our curriculum. Keyboard sleeves will be utilized and considered a high contact surface subject to frequent disinfection.

### **Physical Education:**

Our physical education program will begin with the opening of school. Uniform requirements will remain in place. The types of activities will be carefully evaluated and policies announced before the start of school. Coach Pat Lynch and his staff are prepared to implement reasonable mitigation efforts and are eager to use outdoor spaces to start off the school year.

### **Athletics:**

It is still too early to know if fall sports will go forward, be postponed, or cancelled. Regardless of our school position on athletics participation, we are impacted by policies of other schools or leagues in which we participate. Announcements regarding fall sports will be forthcoming.

## **Other Considerations:**

### **What if the Governor issues another state-wide shutdown/stay-at-home order?**

In the event that there is a mandated shutdown, GGCA will revert to a remote learning model until we are able to safely return to in school learning.

### **What about remote learning options for GGCA students?**

GGCA understands that there are legitimate circumstances or concerns which would prevent some students from participating in our in person programs. For those students, we are developing an arrangement to have core classes available to be taken in an at-home learning environment. These classes will be assigned with reintegration into GGCA in-person classes in mind and will also have provisions for possible inclusion in our physical education programs as a component of the program. Additional information about this possibility will be made available through the school office.

## **Conclusion:**

The anticipation of students and staff members coming back onto campus and into the classrooms brings a renewal of energy and excitement to GGCA. While many aspects of school will look different this fall, we are looking forward to being together again for Christ centered instruction and learning. We look forward to walking together with God's mind in unity, as a school community and offering the best possible education for our students. The GGCA school reopening plan allows us to have our students in the classroom where their needs as a whole person can be addressed. As always, GGCA is concerned not only with academics, but with meeting the physical, emotional, and spiritual needs of our students.

## Notes & Resources

**\* American Academy of Pediatrics Article:** *COVID-19 Planning Considerations: Guidance for School Re-Entry*

Retrieved from

<https://services.aap.org/en/pages/2019-novel-coronavirus-covid-19-infections/clinical-guidance/covid-19-planning-considerations-return-to-in-person-education-in-schools/>

**American Academy of Pediatrics Article:** *Pediatricians, Educators and Superintendents Urge a Safe Return to School This Fall*

Retrieved from

<https://services.aap.org/en/news-room/news-releases/aap/2020/pediatricians-educators-and-superintendents-urge-a-safe-return-to-school-this-fall/>

**\*\*Center for Disease Control (CDC) Article:** *FAQ for School Administrators on Reopening Schools*

Retrieved from

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/schools-childcare/reopening-schools-faq>

[CDC: What is cohorting, and how does it work?](#)

One important strategy that administrators can consider is cohorting (or forming “pods”). [Cohorting](#) forms groups of students, and sometimes teachers or staff, that stay together throughout the school day to minimize exposure for students, teachers, and staff across the school environment.

Ideally, students and staff within a cohort would only have physical proximity with others in the same cohort. This practice may help prevent the spread of SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes COVID-19, by limiting cross-over of students, teachers, and staff to the extent possible, thus:

- decreasing opportunities for exposure to or transmission of SARS-CoV-2,
- facilitating more efficient contact tracing in the event of a positive case, and
- allowing for targeted testing, quarantine, and isolation of a single cohort instead of school-wide measures in the event of a positive case or cluster of cases.

**Johns Hopkins University Article:** *The Ethics of K-12 Reopening: Identifying and Addressing the Values at Stake*

Retrieved from

[https://bioethics.jhu.edu/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/K-12-Equity-Checklist\\_6.19.2020\\_FINAL.pdf](https://bioethics.jhu.edu/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/K-12-Equity-Checklist_6.19.2020_FINAL.pdf)

**Healthy Children Organization Article:** *Return to School During COVID-19*

Retrieved from

<https://www.healthychildren.org/English/health-issues/conditions/COVID-19/Pages/Return-to-School-During-COVID-19.aspx>

**U.S. Food and Drug Administration Article:** *COVID-19: Update on Progress Toward Safely Getting Back to Work and Back to School*

Retrieved from

<https://www.fda.gov/news-events/congressional-testimony/covid-19-update-progress-toward-safely-getting-back-work-and-back-school-06302020>

