



North Iowa Christian School

2020 -2021 SCHOOL YEAR

COVID-19 RESPONSE AND REOPENING PLAN



Dear North Iowa Christian Family,

Our school has been grounded upon a mission to glorify God and serve others in the context of Christian education. Partnering with our parents to raise biblically sound, Christ-centered disciples has been, and will continue to be, the vision which guides our every decision. It has been a unique privilege of mine as an incoming administrator to witness the sacrifice and service of parents and staff to move our school forward and care for its needs throughout the summer. You have demonstrated your faith tangibly, and “your labor in the Lord is not in vain” (1 Cor. 15:58). More than this, the obvious challenges that have been presented to us over the past six months have been navigated with patience, grace, fortitude, and agility. I am humbled by our community’s consistent willingness to provide feedback, offer insights, and submit recommendations to the administration for the sake of ensuring the safety, health, and holistic growth of North Iowa Christian School.

For these reasons, we have continued to clearly communicate to our community throughout the summer our intentions to reopen the school to the extent that our governing authorities enable us. There is no substitute for the classroom dynamic and the hands-on instruction of devoted teachers. This is why we are looking forward to welcoming our students back to the classroom for in-class instruction on Monday, August 24th.

I believe it imperative to remind us all of a message that, unfortunately I am not hearing from many in authority, if any at all: *This is temporary. This, too, shall pass.* It is a message that grows out of an enduring faith in the midst of trial; it is a message that avoids extremes. It is regrettable that much of our current cultural dialogue degenerates into harsh verbal and written attacks. It stems from a profound inability as a people to lift our collective head above the present circumstance for the sake of gaining a vision for the future. It is hope in the future based on the sure foundation of God’s promises to us in Christ that enables us to navigate the present in a manner that honors God and inspires people. If we are not careful we will find ourselves engaged and formed by a similar sectarian spirit instead of the Lord’s Holy Spirit, who gives us nuance, wisdom, and grace for every situation.

The following plan outlines our efforts to maintain a safe and healthy learning environment that cares for each and every student in addition to their families. It represents various aspects of guidance from state and local health officials, as well as the voices of everyone invested in our community, from staff to parents. It will require a collective commitment of cooperation, a mutual understanding of each other’s freedom, and an agility that comes from an awareness of our ever-changing circumstances.

Your School Loves You
Your School Cares For You
Your School is Praying For You

I am writing this with a sincere hope and steadfast faith that through the bond of Christian love we will persevere together. I truly am in eager anticipation to see our students take their next steps in Christ this upcoming season.

In Christ,

Mitchell Moylan
Chief Administrator





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Overall Summary*

North Iowa Christian School will provide in-class education Monday through Friday during normal operating hours to every enrolled student from kindergarten through grade 12 for the 2020-2021 school year so long as Cerro Gordo County transmission percentages of COVID-19 remain within acceptable limits according to the Governor. In other words, if the Governor allows us to be on campus, we will be on-campus discharging our academic responsibilities with excellence.

We will be implementing best practices regarding health and sanitation by using temperature checks, handwashing, and required quarantine in the event of an exposure to COVID-19. We will be regularly sanitizing classrooms, school facilities, and notable areas where there is an increase in traffic. With our class sizes in the vicinity of 2-14 students, we will practice social distancing where feasible, however, with limited classroom space there will be scenarios when it cannot be implemented. We will encourage the use of face coverings during passing periods for our upper classes, but will refrain from issuing a mandate. Instead, we will give our parents the authority to make the decision they deem best for their child while also exercising our authority as educators and classroom leaders who have the same desire for health and safety. Our desire is to care for our students holistically, not merely intellectually or socially. Just as God cares for every dimension of the human person, so do we. It is with this spirit that we will proceed, exercising discernment and grace so as to manage the various desires of everyone in our community.

***We realize this season carries with it the consistent need for agility. The guidance we receive has shown itself to change rather quickly, and we want to be ready to implement new guidance as it comes in. We also want to maintain a listening ear to our community. Therefore, we will be updating this document as the weeks progress, and we will continue to keep you abreast with any changes.**

Collective Commitment Together

As a school who prides itself on giving voice to parents and sharing together in the academic and spiritual formation of our children, we would kindly ask your cooperation with a few things if our plan is to succeed. Success in this context means at least three things: ensuring the highest levels of safety, balancing everyone's sensitivities, and maintaining humility given the gravity of the pandemic. As brothers and sisters in Christ, we are not only called to look out for our own interests, but also to the interests of others (Philippians 2:4).

We ask that as parents you would be serious about the personal health screening of your family. As staff and administration will be giving serious effort to the sanitation of our facilities, we ask that if your child is experiencing any COVID-19 symptoms, please remain home. Even if they are minor symptoms, we ask for your grace in this matter as some of our students have family members who are particularly vulnerable. In addition, there is an increased stigma surrounding those who display signs of any illness at all; we want to prevent unnecessary fear. Finally, as authorities in the classroom we will not hesitate to send students who display signs of sickness home.

Our current illness policy will remain flexible according to the specific needs of our families, and in order to accommodate higher levels of absence due to potential exposure and sensitivity to illness in general. Absences will be addressed on a case-by-case basis.

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Face Coverings

Will North Iowa Christian students be required to wear face coverings while in school?

We will not be mandating the use of face coverings during the school day. However, we will be encouraging grades 7-12 to wear them during passing periods because of the potential for greater congestion in the hallways. Any food servers will be required to wear face coverings and gloves. Because of the fluidity and delicacy of the situation, I am also empowering our staff with the ability to request the wearing of masks in certain classrooms if there is potential concern for exposure due to inability to practice social distancing.

Besides the general question concerning whether students will be in class this fall, the question of masks has been one that I have had to answer more than any other. It is also one that has carried with it greater sensitivity on the part of our parents and teachers. It is an issue where I hope we can do whatever it takes to “maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace” (Eph. 4:3). Face coverings have been demonstrated by local and federal health officials to be effective in reducing spread through respiratory droplets. They have also taken on an almost symbolic value in our current climate. My goal has been to strike a balance that hopefully everyone in our community can appreciate given the freedom our governor has afforded to us for the time being.

What if I want my child to wear a mask?

Every parent is empowered to decide what is best for their child. On the whole, I encourage our parents more and more to be unafraid to make decisions for their children. If you desire your child to wear a mask, then NICS desires to come alongside you to develop solutions where this can be effectively implemented. We are here to serve you to whatever degree we have the capability of doing so.

Will face coverings be provided?

Our school has been blessed by one of our invested members of the community. She has personally made 2 cloth face coverings for every student in grades 7-12. We also have numerous surgical masks available for students which should suffice for the school year.



Health Screenings

Students will have their temperature checked with an IR thermometer upon entrance to the facility each morning. Students and staff will be immediately sent home if they exhibit any symptoms of the virus or if they report having been in contact with someone who is infected.

We are asking everyone in the NICS community to be empowered without fear to communicate any potential COVID-19 symptoms. It is better to practice safety and precaution during this temporary season rather than risk exposing others; simply let the administration know of the student and/or family member experiencing symptoms. The practice of transparency is the practice of receiving grace.

Our state guidance at this point asks that students or staff members remain home when exhibiting *any high-risk symptoms*. If **two or more low-risk symptoms** are occurring, the same request is made.

High Risk Symptoms

New cough, shortness of breath or difficulty breathing, new loss of taste or smell

Low Risk Symptoms

Fever (100.4), headache, muscle and body aches, fatigue, sore throat, runny nose, congestion, nausea, vomiting, diarrhea

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There may be scenarios where a student has a medical condition on file or some other documented symptom previously known that has been properly deemed unrelated to COVID-19. These cases will be left at the discretion of administration concerning whether they will be allowed entrance into the facility. Visitors will be subject to the same health screenings as students.

Responding to a Potential COVID Case

What happens if someone in the school or greater NICS community is suspected or confirmed positive for COVID-19?

If a student demonstrates any of the above high-risk symptoms he/she will be immediately isolated to a designated area away from contact with other students and staff. The student's parents will be notified immediately and asked to take the child home. If a family member makes NICS aware that someone in their living vicinity has been confirmed positive for COVID-19, the administrator will notify local health officials for guidance on next steps. According to guidance, it is likely the student who has been exposed will be quarantined. Any further measures regarding others in the school will be determined alongside the guidance in that moment.



Designated COVID-19 Point of Contact

The administrator will be responsible for responding to COVID-19 concerns. Parents will contact the administrator for any questions or concerns pertaining to school management, health and safety, or other pertinent matters. The administrator will use all avenues at his disposal for communicating pertinent information. This includes, but is not limited to, social media, email threads or direct messaging, and/or phone calls.

Cleaning, Disinfecting, & Hygiene

NICS will be implementing multiple measures to ensure the safety and health of those in the facility. These include:

- The use of an electrostatic sprayer to thoroughly sanitize the entire facility at the end of each school day.
- The frequent use of an approved chemical concentrate for killing COVID-19 to spray down classroom spaces throughout the day. This will be available in every classroom and applied by each teacher at their discretion.
- We will have sanitizing stations in each classroom for the students to frequently use. They will be easily accessible throughout the day. We will be requiring students to use these at the end of each class, and at times the beginning, as well as after any trips to the restroom.



Care in the Classroom and Life in a Day

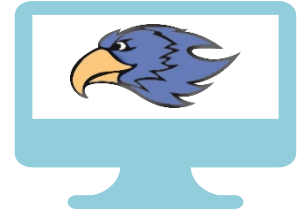
Social distancing will be practiced when feasible, but there will always be scenarios when it cannot be implemented. One of the silver linings to smaller class sizes is the space we do have (in many cases) to spread out desks and prevent continuously close contact with each individual in the class. Teachers will utilize the space in the classroom to most effectively ensure safe distance. Assigned seating will be enacted in the homeroom, class cohorts will be kept together for k-6, and staggered dismissals for larger lunch periods are ways we will do our best to leave space and extend grace.

While social distancing is good, modifying the entirety of our scheduling, classes, lunches, and various elements of the normal school day would be a self-defeating practice to the academic enterprise. Encouraging the use of face coverings during passing periods will alleviate potentially problematic times of continuous, close contact and help to offset the scenarios where social distancing cannot be effectively implemented.

More than this, large group field trips in the first quarter will not occur, and chapel is likely to take place outside during this initial period.



Online Learning Environments



In the event that NICS needs to temporarily shut down the campus, we will move to an online learning environment. In that case we will move to Google Classrooms and implement a temporary, guided curriculum where students are kept at the same standards as if they would be in-class. As God grows our school I am confident we will, one day, be able to offer online and on-campus education simultaneously, but currently synchronous learning like this is simply not feasible. If a student is required to quarantine we will be working to provide a temporary solution where he/she is able to stream the classroom live and submit assignments electronically.

Arrival and Dismissal Procedures

Our arrival and dismissal procedures are currently being worked not only for health and safety, but because of the construction that is likely to continue until November. We will issue communications regarding this in the coming weeks.



A Final Word:

One of the most difficult aspects of the Christian life is learning to live by the grace of God. God's grace is the strength of God given to a person to enable him/her to obey God in the way He desires to be obeyed, namely, in devoted love and covenant faithfulness. Throughout church history there has been a constant tension between the need for law and the exercise of freedom. At some points in our history, we have swung the pendulum to an overly strict, religious spirit of law that does more to promote bondage than the "glorious freedom of the children of God" (Rom. 8:21). On the other hand, and perhaps especially in our day, we have swung the pendulum to an almost flippant, sinful freedom that has done more to cheapen God's grace than appreciate its eternal cost. When believers are altogether focused on laws and restrictions, they tend towards a spirit of condemnation, either upon themselves or others. When believers are excessive in their freedom they tend to wound their own consciences by what they approve and, oftentimes, fall into grave perils that could have been prevented had they practiced restraint, caution, and adherence to a rule. This season has been thrust upon us and, in many ways, we are called to navigate this tension between restriction and freedom; we will not overly mandate, but we will also not be flippant. In either case, mutual understanding is needed by both parties, regardless to which side they are inclined. More than this, we all need to be praying for God's protection over our school and our families. "Unless the LORD watches over [NICS], the watchmen stand guard in vain" (Ps. 127:2). As the old hymn reminds us with its gentle exhortation, "Oh, what peace we often forfeit! Oh, what needless pain we bear! All because we do not carry everything to God in prayer." It is with this heart, humbled by dependence and strengthened by faith, that we ought to, as one family, move into this season, acknowledging each other's vulnerability and weaknesses while maintaining an abiding hope that "He who dwells in the shelter of the Most High will rest in the shadow of the Almighty" (Ps. 91:1). May grace be yours in abundance.

