



2021 — 2022 SCHOOL YEAR

Health & Safety Guidance

PRESCHOOL — 12TH GRADE

UPDATED JANUARY 14, 2022



Introduction

This document shall serve as the health and safety guidance for Grand Rapids Christian Schools (GRCS) for the 2021-2022 school year. This guidance is based upon our belief that all students deserve equal access to in-person learning and is guided by our increased understanding of COVID-19, its limited spread in our mitigated school settings, current national and local data and research, and increased vaccination rates. Preschool and Latchkey programs that operate in licensed facilities are required to adhere to LARA regulations. The guidance provided in this document may be updated at any time if revisions are made to the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS) guidance for schools.

To support schools throughout the school year, GRCS will provide general parameters and guidance concerning quarantine and isolation activities for positive COVID-19 cases and close contacts, testing, and other health and safety-related issues. Our primary goal is to ensure a safe and responsible approach to full in-person learning while providing schools with the tools they need to navigate and appropriately prepare for the school year.

Schools are encouraged to communicate the health and safety policies and practices to their school communities early and often. GRCS will maintain open communication with local and state health officials regarding any changes in federal and state guidance, vaccine updates, and other critical information required to make informed decisions to prioritize the safety of students and staff in our schools.

Schools remain one of the safest places for students, teachers, and school staff with regard to mitigating COVID-19 exposure. Our goal is to give all students the opportunity for safe, in-person learning five days a week. GRCS will determine if/how services and educational programming will be provided if a student must remain home for short periods of time due to illness, isolation, or quarantine.

GRCS recognizes that COVID-19 is not fully behind us and that it will likely remain a reportable communicable disease throughout the coming school year. However, the landscape of the coming school year is a bit different than last year. Several emergency orders and mandates have been lifted and are currently replaced with recommendations. We also have a vaccine offering protection to those 5 years of age and older. Consequently:

- Many of the protocols instituted last year remain essential to protect students and staff and to ensure that our schools operate at full capacity and without outbreaks that could disrupt in-person education.
- This will be a year where targeted mitigation strategies will help us navigate toward a post-pandemic world in which COVID-19 is less impactful on student learning than it has been for the past 22 months.

As we have reviewed the current recommendations from various local, state, and federal health

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agencies, we note the following:

- The CDC has placed a strong emphasis on layered mitigation strategies.
- MDHHS has informed school administrators to consider multiple factors when making decisions about implementing layered strategies, including the level of community COVID-19 transmission and data on the percentage of COVID-19 vaccination within a specific region.
- Kent County has a higher vaccination rate than the state as a whole, which provides a base protection layer that reduces the spread of COVID in our community,

Based on most recent information we have obtained from the CDC, MDHHS, and KCHD, the mitigation strategies Grand Rapids Christian Schools will implement for the start of the 2021-2022 school year are found below. We will implement the following Health and Safety Protocols as outlined in this document.

We will continue to be in close communication with KCHD about the metrics in our community, monitor all orders and guidance issued by MDHHS, and review CDC COVID-19 prevention strategies. Factors that will be regularly monitored include:

- Level of community transmission of COVID-19
- COVID-19 vaccination coverage in the community and among eligible students and staff
- COVID-19 outbreaks of increasing threats at school and the surrounding community.

Note: Preschool and Kids Care (before and aftercare) programs that operate in licensed facilities are required to adhere to LARA regulations. The strategies listed above may change if new guidance or public health orders are issued. We will communicate any updates to you as they become available over the next weeks and months.

Please join me in praying for your child(ren), our staff, and our schools as we start this new school year. God was with us, guiding and protecting us throughout the past year, and we are confident in the hope that we will once again witness His presence in the year to come as, together, we prepare students to be effective servants of Christ in contemporary society.



Tom DeJonge
Superintendent | Grand Rapids Christian Schools

Vaccinations

- Vaccination against COVID-19 is not required, but Grand Rapids Christian Schools strongly encourages vaccination for eligible students and staff.
- The expectations of length of quarantine differ for vaccinated vs. unvaccinated individuals. Therefore, an employee or student may be required to provide proof of their vaccination status to determine appropriate quarantine if they are in close contact with a positive case of COVID-19.
- According to the CDC, vaccination is currently the leading public health prevention strategy in battling the COVID-19 pandemic.
- The CDC and MDHHS state that one way to protect the health of children is to ensure that all eligible populations in a household are fully vaccinated against COVID-19.

Student Vaccination Status Request

- Public schools are able to obtain information on the students who are fully vaccinated based on their residence in their assigned public school attendance area. However, as a Christian school that enrolls students from **multiple attendance areas**, Grand Rapids Christian Schools **is not able to obtain that same information**. Though we believe that a high percentage of our eligible students **have been fully vaccinated**, we have no way of knowing that for sure or who is vaccinated.
- Therefore, in that context, Grand Rapids Christian Schools asks parents of students 5 years of age and older to **submit their child's current COVID vaccination status using the form linked below**.
- Having that information **significantly assists** our administrative team at each building with contact tracing. The CDC's current guidelines do not require quarantining students who are fully vaccinated, even if they are determined to be a close contact. The information, therefore, enables us to do **all we can to avoid disrupting in-person education** by unnecessarily quarantining or isolating students who are a close contact.
- Be assured that this information will be held in strict confidence and used for the purpose of limiting unnecessary learning interruptions and **only in the event decisions need to be made about quarantine or isolation**.

[Student Vaccination Information](#)



Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

- Grand Rapids Christian Schools shall ensure that people in pre-kindergarten consistently and properly wear a facial covering while inside any enclosed building or structure of the institution.
- Grand Rapids Christian Schools shall ensure that all persons, regardless of vaccination status, providing service to any persons in pre-kindergarten properly and consistently wear a facial covering while inside any enclosed building or structure of the institution.
- K–12th grade staff are strongly encouraged to wear a facial covering if they are fully vaccinated. Any unvaccinated staff member is required to wear a mask, with the exception of a staff member with a medical exemption.

This shall not apply to the following persons:

- Persons in the act of eating or drinking.
- Persons with developmental conditions of any age attending school for whom it has been demonstrated that the use of a face covering would inhibit the person's access to education. These are limited to persons with an Individualized Education Plan, Section 504 Plan, Individualized Healthcare Plan, or equivalent.
- Vaccinated teachers who are working with children who are hard of hearing or students with developmental conditions who benefit from facial cues.
- Persons who have a medical reason confirmed in writing from a Medical Doctor (MD) or Doctor of Osteopathic Medicine (DO) currently licensed to practice medicine in the State of Michigan.



Hygiene

- GRCS will continue teaching handwashing, respiratory etiquette, and good hygiene habits.
- Hand hygiene and disinfection are foundational public health tools that have historically prevented the spread of communicable diseases. GRCS will provide supplies to support healthy hygiene behaviors.
- Faculty and staff will teach and reinforce proper handwashing with soap and water for at least 20 seconds and/or the safe use of hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol. Staff and students will be educated on how to cough and sneeze into their elbows or to cover with a tissue. Used tissues will be thrown in the trash and hands washed immediately using proper hand hygiene techniques.

Cleaning & Environment

- Throughout last year, GRCS instituted strict and scheduled cleaning regimens.
- GRCS will continue to institute these protocols with the exception of those that have been determined by our health officials to have not been effective in mitigating the spread of the virus and are no longer necessary.
- Schools will clean and disinfect high-touch surfaces including student worktables and desks daily.
- The use of physical barriers, such as plexiglass shields, is no longer recommended, per the CDC. Plastic desk shields, cleaning desks hourly, and disinfecting students' hands when returning from the playground are three examples of last year's protocols that we will not continue.
- Teachers and staff will open doors and windows, use child-safe fans in classrooms, and open or crack windows in buses to improve air circulation as long as doing so does not pose a safety risk.



Spacing, Movement, & Access

- The CDC recommends maintaining a range of 3-6 feet of physical distance between students within classrooms.
- As we did last year, GRCS is committed to maintaining at least 3 and up to 6 feet between students wherever possible.
- Teachers will maintain seating charts with assigned student seats as much as possible to assist with contact tracing when necessary.
- School visitors may enter the school building, but limits will be considered and determined by each school. A log of all visitors is required. Logs will document the date, contact information, and arrival/departure times.
- Unvaccinated guests are required to wear a mask while inside school buildings.

Screening Students and Staff and Testing Protocols

- At this time, school-based testing protocols are available to parents for their children.
- While the daily health screener is no longer required for students and staff, it is vitally important that parents/guardians monitor their children for symptoms of infectious illness every day through home-based symptom screening. This approach relies on students and their caregivers to identify when the student might have symptoms of infectious illness.
- Students who are sick or displaying symptoms of infectious illness should not attend school and seek medical care when necessary.
- Staff members should monitor their health for symptoms of infectious illness every day.
- Staff who are sick or displaying symptoms of infectious illness should remain home and seek medical care when necessary.
- Schools will post symptom identification signage at the entrance(s) of their building.



Responding to Positive COVID-19 Cases and Close Contacts

- GRCS may continue to report positive cases to KCHD and collaborate with them to identify and trace close contacts to a COVID-19 positive individual.
- Students and staff who test positive for COVID-19 regardless of vaccination status must isolate.
- GRCS will notify families of the presence of any laboratory positive or clinically diagnosed cases of COVID-19 in the classroom and/or school to encourage closer observation for any symptoms at home.

Busing and Student Transportation

- Per the order issued by the CDC on January 29, 2021, masks are still required to be worn by all people while on public transportation, which includes school buses, both public and private. Therefore students will be required to wear masks when riding GRCS, GRPS, and RPS buses.
- There are no capacity restrictions for school transportation for the 2021-2022 school year.
- It is recommended that household members sit together in the same seat when possible.
- It is recommended that schools continue to create distance between children on school buses.
- Bus personnel should continue to maintain seating charts with assigned student seats as much as possible to assist with case investigation and contact tracing when needed.
- Bus windows should be opened to improve ventilation when it does not create a safety hazard.



Athletics

- At this time, there are no COVID-19 related restrictions or requirements for athletics.
- Updated guidance from MHSAA will be followed by the Grand Rapids Christian Schools Athletic Department.

Gatherings & Extracurricular Activities

- It is recommended that three feet of distance is maintained between individuals during indoor dining.
- Non-liturgical group gatherings and extracurricular activities are allowed unless local health data changes and deem them unsafe.
- Field trips may resume.

Mental and Social-Emotional Health

- GRCS will foster an environment of Christian charity and respect for others' decisions regarding vaccination status and the use of masks.
- GRCS personnel will continue to monitor the mental, social, academic, emotional, and spiritual well-being of all students and staff, providing intervention, assistance, and support when needed.



Virtual Learning

- Despite the many mitigation strategies GRCS will actively implement, we understand there may be students within our community dealing with unique circumstances, such as chronic medical conditions, that could make daily in-person attendance a barrier or students for whom additional learning accommodations outside of a classroom setting are necessary.
- Therefore a Virtual Learning option will be made available for students in kindergarten through 6th grade.
- If parents believe their K-6 student(s) meets this criteria and want to request access to a limited virtual option, they are asked to complete this application. Not all applications can be honored and will be considered on a case-by-case basis.

[K-6 Virtual Option Application](#)