



Dear VRCS Families,

With the start of the 2021-22 school year quickly approaching, our two priorities are keeping students and staff safe and keeping our schools open for in-person instruction. The following information will serve as a guide to help navigate COVID-19 throughout the school year ahead. While last year may have been challenging, the partnership between students, parents, staff, and administration contributed to the success of the 2020-21 school year. In the words of the late Mattie Stepanek, "Unity is strength; when there is teamwork and collaboration, wonderful things can be achieved." Together, let's make this school year remarkable.

Yours in Christ,

Mrs. Laura Blake

VRCS President

Use of Face Coverings and Masks

- Mask-wearing will be optional at both campuses for students and staff during the 2021-22 school year.
- We support any student or staff member who chooses to wear or not wear a mask regardless of their vaccination status.
- Individuals who are not vaccinated are encouraged to wear a mask.

It is important to note that Venango Region Catholic School reserves the right to change this mask policy at any time during the 2021-22 school year. Local, state or federal mandates could warrant a change, as could a significant increase in positive COVID-19 rates in specific schools or grade levels.

VRCS Return to School Plan

Several factors were considered when making decisions about masks and other mitigation strategies for the upcoming year:

1. Administration will consider recommendations from the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), The Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE), and the PA Department of Health (PA DOH). However, schools will be required to follow mandates. **There are no mandates from the CDC, PDE, PA DOH, or the Catholic Schools Office.**
2. County Rate of Transmission – Schools located within counties that have substantial or high rates of COVID transmission may need to reinstate mitigation strategies depending on what is happening in the school. Mitigation strategies may include but are not limited to student/staff screening, social distancing, wearing masks, quarantining, and temporary school closures. **Currently, Venango County is within the moderate category of community transmission.**
3. Number of COVID cases, known exposures, or students and staff who have been quarantined in a school. VRCS may need to reinstate mitigation strategies if there is a potential for COVID spread within the school.

★ All information within this document is subject to change based on current CDC and PA Department of Health and PA Department of Education guidelines.

★ The VRCS Return to School Plan will be on the school website and is available upon request. Please note, it is a living document based on ever-changing guidance from CDC, PA Department of Health, and PA Department of Education.

Health and Safety Measures

How will monitoring of student and staff health take place?

- VRCS staff will check temperatures before reporting to work. All employees who are sick, have a temperature of 100.4°F or higher, or who have recently had close contact with a person with COVID-19 are required to stay home.
- VRCS parents will be asked to check student temperatures before sending students to school. Students who are sick, have a temperature of 100.4°F or higher, or who have recently had close contact with a person with COVID-19 are required to stay home.
- VRCS recommends that all students and staff conduct daily health checks prior to leaving for school. These checks would include temperature and symptom screening for chills, cough, shortness of breath, fatigue, muscle or joint pains, headache, loss of taste or smell, sore throat, congestion, nausea, vomiting, or diarrhea.
- Parents must report a student's absence and any COVID-19 symptoms to the office.
- Any person on either campus that presents signs of COVID-19 will have their temperature checked and will complete a series of questions regarding symptoms.
- Any person who presents a fever will immediately be moved to a holding area. Any temperature 100.4 °F or greater is considered a fever.
- While in the holding area, a second temperature check will be administered to ensure accuracy and a second verification of potential symptoms. Based on the results, parents or guardians will be contacted to remove the student from school. Staff members presenting a fever will be sent home.



What if VRCS experiences cases of COVID-19?

- VRCS will report any new diagnoses of COVID-19 to local health departments and will notify teachers, staff, and families of students who were close contacts as soon as possible.
- As stated by the PA Department of Education, when a case of COVID-19 is identified in a school setting, public health staff from DOH or the County or Municipal Health Department (CMHD) will work with school administrators to provide guidance and advice related to cleaning and disinfecting, contact tracing and quarantine recommendations, and closing certain areas of the school or the entire school building if necessary.
- Each case (or possible case) will be handled on an individual basis as each case may have different factors that impact the decision-making process. VRCS will follow PA DOH recommendations for each case. PA DOH will provide assistance to school entities should an outbreak occur.
- The CDC guidance states that people who are fully vaccinated and do not have COVID-19 symptoms do not need to quarantine or get tested after an exposure to someone with COVID-19.
- If exposed to a close contact, within 6 ft, unvaccinated and not masked individuals will be asked to quarantine.

Will masks be required for students who utilize public school or VRCS transportation?

- VRCS is working with local public school districts to arrange transportation routines for the 2021-22 school year.
- **Per partnering public school districts, all students are required to wear a mask while on a van or bus.**
- If you have questions or concerns regarding transportation, please contact the public-school district in which you reside. If you have difficulty with the public school district or have been denied transportation, please contact the school office immediately.



How will you ensure the buildings are cleaned and disinfected to safely welcome staff and students?

- VRCS will follow the *GUIDANCE FOR CLEANING AND DISINFECTING PUBLIC SPACES, WORKPLACES, BUSINESSES, SCHOOLS, AND HOMES* published by the CDC. VRCS will consistently monitor and follow the latest recommendations published by the CDC.
- VRCS will continue to use Electrostatic Hand Sprayers and Proxy HDOX Solution at each campus at the end of each school day. Electrostatic Hand Sprayers will also be used after each large gathering and sporting event at St. Stephen School and Venango Catholic Jr./Sr. High School.
- Maintenance staff, and trained staff members, will follow daily and weekly cleaning checklists designed specifically to outline how often an area should be cleaned, sanitized, disinfected, and ventilated.

Will students attend weekly school masses?

- Students will attend weekly masses in-person in the school gymnasiums. We will follow the parish and the Bishop of Erie's decree for mass attendance protocols.
- Students will be seated by grade socially distanced.

Will school assemblies and field trips return for the 2021-22 school year?

- School assemblies will resume. Students will be seated by grade to ensure appropriate distancing.
- Field trips will be reinstated and determined by teachers and administration.



How will social distancing be implemented in the buildings?

- Social distancing at each VRCS campus will follow the recommended CDC guidelines and PA DOH guidance for school reopening. When feasible, all members of the VRCS community (students, teachers, admin, and staff) will remain socially distanced (3ft.).
- **St. Stephen Elementary:**
Classrooms are arranged to ensure each student has their own designated socially distanced space to work and store items. Seating charts will be utilized. Students will not share cubbies nor lockers. Each student will have a designated storage bin with a lid.
- **Venango Catholic Jr./Sr. High School:**
Classrooms are arranged to ensure each student is socially distanced following CDC guidelines. Seating charts will be utilized. Classroom workspaces will be cleaned between classes. Each student will have a locker 3ft. in distance from the next student.
- **Cafeteria**
 - Cafeteria space has been configured to enable social distancing.
 - Proper cleaning and disinfecting procedures will be followed each lunch period.
 - Elementary – All students are required to pack their own lunch.
 - Jr./Sr. High School – Lunch can be purchased, or students can choose to pack.
 - No-touch water bottle filling stations have been installed at both campuses.



Will VRCS have athletics?

- High school, junior high, and elementary sports seasons will be held. All athletics, coaches, and parents will be expected to honor the VRCS Return to Play Plan.

Can I volunteer?

- Volunteers can resume service to our schools. Please contact the office for clearances and volunteer information.



Will VRCS offer remote instruction?

- Our goal at VRCS is to provide safe, in-person education to students five days a week. We also believe that physically being in school has academic, social, and emotional learning advantages that cannot be replicated in a virtual environment. Therefore, all VRCS students are expected to attend classes in person at their respective campuses.
- Virtual learning will only be offered if:
 - A student has a documented medical condition* that will prohibit him/her from returning to school for more than ten consecutive days.
 - Schools are closed due to weather conditions.
 - State mandated closures.
- After receiving documentation, VRCS staff and administration will determine if virtual learning can/should be offered, based on the individual needs of the child. Age, ability, access to technology and parental support are also factors when considering if a child will have success learning “outside” of the classroom. Students will also receive a provisional acceptance agreement that will outline their academic and behavioral expectations. If the student should fail to meet these expectations, they will be asked to return in-person learning or encouraged to take advantage of cyber schooling opportunities provided by their home district.

**Documentation must be provided in advance from the student's designated family doctor/PCP. This does not include documentation from mental health professionals (LPC, LCSW, etc.) or emergency health professionals (i.e., ER visits, Urgent Care).*

What special protocols will be implemented to protect students and student family members who are at higher risk for severe illness?

- Special protocols for students and student family members who are at higher risk for severe illness will be handled case by case to make the best decisions for that student or staff member. Each case will be treated as a unique situation.

Will VRCS follow PA State Mandates?

- VRCS will follow PA state mandates. However, recommendations will always be reviewed as a system to keep safety as our priority.

Who should I contact if I have questions?

- Return to School Plan or School Policy
Mrs. Laura Blake
laura.blake@venangocatholic.org
814-677-3098 or 814- 677- 3035
- Academics
Ms. Katherine Chandley
katherine.chandley@venangocatholic.org
814-677-3098 or 814-677-3035
- Classroom Rules or Instruction
Please direct classroom specific questions to your child’s homeroom teacher. www.venangocatholic.org/faculty

