



DIOCESE *OF* VENICE — *IN FLORIDA* —

Department of Education

REOPENING WITH CONFIDENCE:

*Frequently Asked Questions for
Catholic School Leaders*

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Let your speech always be with grace, as though seasoned with salt, so that you will know how you should respond to each person (Colossians 4:6).

Purpose

The Diocese of Venice stands ready to support its Catholic Schools in establishing a safe, healthy and nurturing environment that flourishes from our Catholic faith and principles. To better communicate and coordinate efforts between the Diocese and the individual schools, the Department of Education has identified Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) to inform all interested parties with relevant information and help school leaders respond to inquiries in a timely manner.

The Best Policy

Regardless of the inquiry, honesty is the best policy. Never assume, allude or discuss in detail on matters that lay beyond your level of supervision or area of expertise. If you are uncertain how to answer a question, refer to the appropriate subject matter expert or contact your immediate supervisor for guidance.

Diocese Response

If questions or issues arise that would benefit from a prompt and professional response from the Diocese of Venice, **please contact the Diocese's Communications Department or Department of Education at (941) 484-9543.**

The Department of Education has published comprehensive plans, presentations, and other resources to support our schools and their reopening efforts. You may access these resources at <https://dioceseofvenice.org/offices/offices-departments/catholicschools/>

<The following FAQ may be shared with families>

Back to School Prayer

Loving God, Our creator, our savior, our companion, bless this journey of a new school year that we undertake today. Refresh our souls and renew our spirits as we embrace the beautiful ministry you have called us to. We welcome those who are new to this community and ask that you strengthen them to share the wonderful gifts you have given them. Lord, make our hearts pure as we prepare for the return of students to this school, and may you guide them to return with open hearts and minds eager to learn.

We ask this in Your name, Amen

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Categories

The FAQ is divided into three categories:

1. **Health & Safety**
2. **Health Protocols**
3. **Academics & Other Programs**

Please note that the Diocese's School Reopening Plan contains general guidance for its Catholic schools. Each school has developed a customized plan that provides details on how to manage, enforce, and implement the guidance listed. Contact your principal for how these FAQs best apply to your school's plans, policies, and procedures.

CATEGORY 1: HEALTH AND SAFETY

Q1-1 What does "reopening our schools" really mean?

A: Gathering as a school community is an integral part of Catholic education. Schools will reopen campuses Aug. 17. The Department of Education has developed a detailed plan that outlines the reopening process. The plan also includes decision trees, action steps, and supplemental resources for numerous contingencies from sanitizing and social distancing to temperature screenings and quarantines.

Q1-2: Will students be safe when school is reopened?

A: Safety is always a high priority in Catholic education. In constructing our reopening plan, the Diocese of Venice has studied guidance from federal, state and local authorities such as the Centers for Disease Control and the Florida Department of Health. The Department of Education has worked closely with all 15 schools to develop a comprehensive Diocesan plan that integrates with the individual school plans.

Q1-3: Has your plan been reviewed by medical experts?

A: The Diocese of Venice created a COVID-19 Task Force comprising subject matter experts in health, medicine, education, logistics, and management. By working closely with every school, the Department of Education has developed an effective and practical plan that puts the health and safety of our students and faculty at the top of every issue.

Q1-4: Who decides when a school has met the requirements to reopen?

A: Every school must meet specific requirements established by the Diocese of Venice. Schools must complete a checklist and submit it to the Diocese's Department of Education for review. In completing this checklist, schools have been asked to form its individual plan reviewed by local subject matter experts. This system helps school administrators analyze and finalize their schools' reopening strategy.

Q1-5: Will all students be allowed to return to school at the same time?

A: Yes. Our plan coincides with state and local mandates calling for the return of all students for full-day instruction five days per The Department of Education.

Q1-6: Will students need to wear face coverings at school?

A: Yes. All persons age two and older must wear masks or neck gaiters while at school. Masks may be removed for brief periods of time under certain circumstances such as during lunch or physical education. Students who remove masks must maintain proper social distance and be under the direct supervision of a faculty member.

Q1-7: Do I need to purchase face coverings for my child?

A: Yes. The Department of Education encourages families to purchase masks for their children. Parents may buy disposable or reusable masks. Disposable masks must be thrown away at the end of every school day. Reusable masks should be cleaned after every use. Families are encouraged that each child should have two extra masks in his or her backpack.

Q1-8: Will students be required to maintain social distancing at school?

A: The plan calls for each student to be part of a larger group called a "student cohort." Each student cohort will roughly align with a homeroom class. When students are with their cohort, they maintain proper social distancing. Homeroom teachers are also part of student cohorts, and they are permitted to interact with the student cohort on a group and individual level provided masks are worn. When students are around other student cohorts, they should remain at least six feet apart.

Q1-9: How will drop off and pick-up be handled?

A: Each school will plan, organize, and execute drop off and pick up procedures that are conducive to their respective reopening plans. Every plan includes temperature checks, the use of hand sanitizer, and questions about each student's physical health. Contact your school's principal for specific instructions.

If a student has a temperature above **100.4⁰ F** or complains of other COVID-19 related symptoms, he or she will be immediately sent to the office, and his/her parents will be contacted and asked to pick up the child .

Q1-10 What does the plan say about safety and cleanliness requirements for school facilities?

A: The plan outlines cleaning and sanitation procedures, while each school's plan includes specific requirements for the ongoing cleaning and sanitizing throughout the campus. Facilities will be cleaned throughout the day,, with priority given to common surfaces and high-traffic areas. Each plan contains instructions for schools on managing shared areas such as hallways, gymnasiums, cafeterias and bathrooms.

Q1-11: How will lunch take place when school reopens?

A: Each school has developed a customized plan that fits its dining facilities. Contact your school for more information.

Q1-12: Will recess be offered?

A: Schools may conduct recess provided they meet social distancing and equipment cleaning procedures.

Q1-13: Will extended care (before and after care) be available this year?

A: Yes. Schools may continue to offer extended care. Contact your school's staff for more information.

Q1-14: I do not feel safe sending my child back to school. What are my options?

A: The schools have implemented many measures to ensure the safety of students at our schools this fall. The Department of Education understands that some families may not wish to return. Schools have developed at home learning options. Families who wish to begin the school year through at home learning should contact their school's principal

Q1-15: What is your policy for children who have been traveling outside of the local area?

A: Schools adhere to the travel guidelines established by the state and local officials. If you or a member of your household travels to another country or to a state identified by the Florida Department of Health as having a surge in COVID-19 cases, your school may ask you to wait for 14 days until returning your child to school.

Q1-16: What happens if the state imposes more restrictions that directly impact schools?

A: The Department of Education will work closely with state officials to determine whether The Department of Education can continue face-to-face instruction (even on an alternate schedule). If necessary, The Department of Education will return to at-home virtual instruction.

CATEGORY 2: HEALTH PROTOCOLS

Q2-1: What are the symptoms of COVID-19?

A: The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) has identified several symptoms of COVID-19, including high fever (above 100.4°F), sore throat, coughing, nausea, headache, muscle aches, loss of taste or smell, runny nose, fatigue, diarrhea and difficulty breathing.

Q2-2: What should I do if my child has symptoms of COVID-19?

A: If your child shows symptoms of COVID-19, you should contact your doctor. Your doctor may ask that your child participate in a COVID-19 test. You should alert your school's main office and not send your child to school.

If the symptoms occur during the school day, your child will be immediately sent to the office and you will be contacted to pick your child up from school.

Q2-3: My child had COVID-19-like symptoms, but tested negative for COVID-19. When can he/she return to school?

A: You should keep your child home until the illness' symptoms disappear. Your school will require you to provide a negative COVID-19 test and/or a doctor's note before your child can return to school.

Q2-4: What should I do if my child tests positive for COVID-19?

A: You should immediately contact your doctor for additional instructions, then contact your school's main office for specific instructions on the conditions your child must meet before he/she can return to school.

Q2-5: When can a student return to school after receiving a positive COVID-19 test?

A: If a student tests positive for COVID-19 or does not seek medical attention, students must isolate and not return to school until they have met the CDC's criteria to discontinue home isolation. This includes:

1. **A negative COVID-19 test result within or after the 14 day quarantine.**
2. **A doctor's note allowing the student to return to school**
3. **If a student has tested positive, the student cannot return until the student has tested negative for COVID-19 within or after the 14 days of quarantine.**

Any case of a student testing positive for COVID-19 must be reported to the Diocese of Venice Department of Education.

Q2-6: What should I do if a member of my household (who is not my child) tests positive for COVID-19?

A: You should immediately contact your school's main office. Your school will ask that you keep your child home for at least 14 days. Your child may return to school if your family member recovers from COVID-19, meets the criteria in the Question #2-5, and your child shows no COVID-19 symptoms.

Q2-7: What happens if my child's teacher tests positive for COVID-19?

A: Should any employee have COVID-19 symptoms or tests positive for COVID-19, The Department of Education will follow the same protocols used for students (see above). If your child's teacher becomes sick and is unable to work, your school will provide a substitute teacher.

Q2-8: What happens if another student in my child's class tests positive for COVID-19?

A: Your school will inform every parent/guardian that a student has tested positive for COVID-19. The school's staff will monitor all members of the student cohort for COVID-19 symptoms. Students will be allowed to complete work virtually while the cohort is away from school.

Q2-9: Could my child's school campus be closed down due to COVID-19 this year?

A: The Department of Education will enact every effective and practical measure to ensure a safe and healthy learning environment. If numerous cases result in the isolation of multiple classes or student cohorts, the Diocese may close the campus and temporarily transition all students to virtual learning. Parents will be updated regularly should that need arise.

CATEGORY 3: ACADEMICS AND OTHER PROGRAMS**Q3-1: Will my child's curriculum be changed this year?**

A: Every school is committed to deliver high-quality instruction in core subjects (religion, math, science social studies, and language arts). Each school has established specific requirements for departmentalized classes and special area subjects. The implementation of health and safety requirements as outlined in the Diocese of Venice's plan and the school's plan create complexities in instruction, but our commitment remains to provide your child the best possible faith-based education.

Q3-2: How will my child's classroom look different?

A: Every school has re-evaluate and re-arranged its classrooms to minimize risk of any infection in the classroom. Desks and tables will be spread out as much as possible, and they will be arranged so that they face the front of the room. Teachers are encouraged to remove extra furniture and non-essential items to maximize floor space.

Q3-3: Will students share school supplies?

A: Schools will minimize and, if possible, eliminate the sharing of school supplies. If it is impossible to avoid sharing supplies such as equipment used for physical education, then these items will be cleaned and sanitized before and after use.

Q3-4: I have a child in preschool or kindergarten. Is high-quality learning possible?

A: Yes. The Department of Education is working closely with its early education teachers to continue the best possible quality of instruction in preschool and kindergarten. While health and safety requirements are in place, our teachers will continue to work hard in the coming year to ensure your child grows intellectually, emotionally and spiritually.

Q3-5: Will students move to different classrooms?

A: Schools will incorporate a student cohort model when feasible. This model mitigates movement to different classrooms in departmentalized settings. Most teachers will go to their student cohort's homeroom and conduct instruction. Exceptions may be made for certain subjects that require specialized rooms or equipment such as gymnasiums or computer labs. Contact your school's principal for more information.

Q3-6: Will schools still offer classes in art, music, PE and other supplemental courses?

A: Yes. Special subject area teachers will travel to each class' homeroom for instruction whenever possible. This procedure will likely encompass art, music, health, and foreign language. Areas for specialized instructions such as a gymnasium, STREAM (Science, Technology, Religion, Arts, Mathematics) Lab or media center will be thoroughly cleaned and sanitized.

Q3-7: Will students participate in field trips?

A: Schools will not participate in in-person field trips for the first quarter of the 2020-21 school year.

Q3-8: My child has an identified learning, behavioral or physical need. How will the schools meet this and similar needs?

A: As each need is different, your school will determine whether additional modifications are needed. The school will contact families to relay their findings and discuss the best course of action. For urgent matters, please contact your school's main office for more information.

Q3-9: Is it possible to meet with the school's principal or specific teacher?

A: Yes. Individual meetings will take place via phone or video conference.

Q3-10: Where can stakeholder groups such as the school board or booster club convene? Similarly, how may committees for fundraising events conduct meetings?

A: Such meetings should take place virtually.

Q3-11: Will school masses still take place?

A: Schools will follow guidance that the Diocese of Venice's parishes have enacted to allow for the celebration of mass under specific conditions. School staff will work closely with its pastor and parish to celebrate mass.

Q3-12: How will extracurricular activities be impacted this year?

A: The plan includes guidance for clubs, sports, performing arts and other extracurricular activities. Please contact the school's staff for more information.