



Greenville Christian Academy's
Re-Entry Plan
2020/2021 School Year

The Process

There are many federal, state, and local guidelines available when it comes to making decisions on how to best mitigate the risk and protect our school and community from the spread of COVID-19. Greenville Christian Academy has established a re-entry task force committee which has worked diligently to develop a re-entry strategy that allows for balance, flexibility, transparency, and prioritizes the health and safety of our school community. GCA has been preparing the physical campus to support students in the fall of 2020. In accordance with guidance from our accreditation agency, GCA is able to execute the physical campus modifications needed to support students safely returning to campus in the fall of 2020.

For the last several months, we have carefully been engaged in research, consultation, and discussion with various officials, experts, and stakeholders on the question of how to reopen the school. We have read journal articles and published research, consulted with professionals in the GCA community, and met with the board of directors, faculty, parents, and students. **As you can imagine, there is no consensus on many details.** Yet, we do believe that a reasonable and safe approach is contained in this plan that will allow us to begin school.

From the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP):

“Schools are fundamental to child and adolescent development and well-being and provide our children and adolescents with academic instruction, social and emotional skills, safety, reliable nutrition, physical/speech and mental health therapy, and opportunities for physical activity, among other benefits. Beyond supporting the educational development of children and adolescents, schools play a critical role in addressing racial and social inequity. As such, it is critical to reflect on the differential impact SARS-CoV-2 and the associated school closures have had on different races, ethnic and vulnerable populations. These recommendations are provided acknowledging that our understanding of the SARS-CoV-2 pandemic is changing rapidly.”

From the Hospital for Sick Children:

“Not opening schools in September would continue to have a negative impact on the mental, behavioral and developmental health of children. We hope these recommendations help provide a framework to keep everyone safe when school doors reopen.”

Scientific, Statistical, and Psychological Basis



Multiple reports from around the world indicate that children account for less than 5-10% of COVID-19 infections. In North Carolina, according to the North Carolina Dept. of Public Health, of 93,426 COVID-19 cases reported as of July 16th, the number of cases in children aged 0–17 years was 10,118 (11.00%). There have been 0 reported deaths due to COVID-19 in North Carolina for ages 0-17. Children are less susceptible to SARS-CoV-2 infection and may be less likely to transmit the virus to others. There is also strong evidence that the majority of children who become infected are either asymptomatic or have only mild symptoms, such as cough, fever, and sore throat. In Pitt County, there have been 1,040 COVID-19 cases reported as of July 16. That’s 58 cases per 10,000 residents.

The community based public health measures (national lockdown, school closures, stay at home orders, self-isolation, etc.) implemented to mitigate COVID-19 and “flatten the curve” have significant adverse health and welfare consequences for children. Some of these unintended consequences include decreased vaccination coverage, delayed diagnosis, lack of care for non-COVID-19 related medical conditions, and adverse impact on children’s behavior and mental health. Increased rates of depression, trauma, drug abuse and addiction and even suicide can be anticipated.

As mentioned, it is critical that we balance the risks of COVID-19 in children, which appear to be minimal, with the harms of school closure which is impacting their physical, spiritual, emotional, and mental health. It should be recognized that it will not be possible to remove all risk of infection and disease now that SARS-CoV-2 is well established in many communities. Mitigation of risk, while easing restrictions, will be needed for the foreseeable future.

Return to school has always been associated with increases in cases of community-associated seasonal respiratory viral infections. As a result, it is anticipated that there will likely be an increase in cases of COVID-19 upon the resumption of school, and as such, the appropriate measures should be proactively put in place to mitigate the effects of such an increase. This includes the need for readily available testing and contact tracing support, which is critical to avoid outbreaks. Consistency is essential for our students and it will be important to ensure that once children return to school, our schools stay open to the extent possible. Furthermore, children rely on structure and schedule for stability, which supports the need for a daily school model.

According to the AAP:

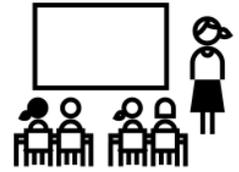
“Although many questions remain, the preponderance of evidence indicates that children and adolescents are less likely to be symptomatic and less likely to have severe disease resulting from SARS-CoV-2 infection. In addition, children may be less likely to become infected and to spread infection. Policies to mitigate the spread of COVID-19 within schools must be balanced with the known harms to children, adolescents, families, and the community by keeping children at home.”

In addition, the pediatric hospital affiliated with the University of Toronto (UT), has issued the following guidance:

“Strict physical distancing should not be emphasized to children in the school setting as it is not practical and could cause significant psychological harm. Close interaction, such as playing and socializing, is central to child development and should not be discouraged.”

“When children are in the classroom, to the extent possible, efforts should be made to arrange the classroom furniture to leave as much space as possible between students. Smaller class sizes, if feasible, will aid in physical distancing. However, the daily school routine should not be disrupted to accommodate smaller class sizes for physical distancing.”

Physical Distancing



When students are in the classroom, to the extent possible, GCA will arrange the classroom furniture to leave as much space as possible between students.

All classrooms will follow these guidelines:

- Student seating will be placed as far apart as possible within the classroom, but we cannot promise exactly 6 feet.
- All desks will face the same direction.
- When possible, the sharing of supplies among students will be avoided. When supplies are shared, they will be disinfected between uses.
- Students will be encouraged to maintain distancing at appropriate times. However, the recommendations from the AAP and the UT indicate that this is not only impractical to maintain at all times but also undesirable since it affects important social interactions for students.
- Elementary students are already together in their classroom, so they will remain together during their lunch time and will be appropriately distanced from the other grades who are in the cafeteria.
- Middle school and high school students will have the option to eat lunch in the cafeteria, designated classrooms, gym, or outside.

Hand Hygiene

Regular hand washing and sanitizing are among the most effective ways to control viral spread. Students will have regular access to soap and water and alcohol-based hand sanitizers.

- All classrooms and common spaces will have hand sanitizer (non-methanol) stations available to students and staff. Students will be encouraged to regularly use hand sanitizer.
- Students will be expected to wash their hands before and after lunch, before and after recess, and after using the restroom.
- Instruction and reminders on handwashing will be provided by staff. Signs, announcements, and other methods will be used to reinforce the importance of hand hygiene.

HAND
WASHING



Face Covering: Masks/Shields

Non-medical masks may reduce transmission from individuals who are shedding the virus. However, the extent of this benefit is highly debated and would only be potentially beneficial if done properly. In fact, if worn incorrectly, it could lead to increased risk of infection. Also, it is not practical for a child to wear a mask properly for the duration of a school day. It is noteworthy that several European countries have had children successfully return to school without face masks.

The following points were considered in the formulation of this policy:

- There is a lack of evidence that wearing a face mask prevents SARS-CoV-2 transmission in children.
- Children are not typically trained in their use and there is potential for increased risk of infection with improper mask use.
- It is impractical for a child to wear a mask properly for the duration of the school day. Children would need assistance to follow appropriate procedures for putting on and taking off the mask (i.e. during mealtimes, snack times). In addition, during these times when the mask is removed, they would need to be stored appropriately to prevent infection spread.
- In young children in particular, masks can be irritating and may lead to increased touching of the face and eyes which could increase the risk of infection.
- It is likely that masks will be disposed of improperly throughout the school and potentially lead to increased risk by children playing with them.
- It is recognized that some parents and children may choose to wear masks. This is a personal choice and will not be discouraged.

Every employee and school family will have the choice to wear a face covering. If an employee or student does not wear a mask/shield, we, by law, are not able to ask why (HIPPA, ADA Laws, and executive order); thus, if a teacher or student feels it's not conducive to their learning or teaching, no-one should make them wear it. GCA trusts our teachers and students enough to not interrogate them as to their motives behind their choosing to wear or not wear a mask. The law explicitly allows for that (42 U.S.C.A § 12203). Those choosing to enroll their student(s) at GCA should understand that it is unlawful to coerce, intimidate, or threaten anyone choosing to wear or not wear a mask.

Environmental Cleaning

Detailed policies are beyond the scope of this document. In brief, SARS-CoV-2 has been detected on a variety of surfaces, and it is possible that infection can be transmitted by touching contaminated surfaces and then touching mucous membranes (i.e. mouth, nose, eyes). As a matter of utmost importance, GCA will perform deep, thorough, comprehensive, and detailed cleaning of the school immediately prior to the first day of school, followed thereafter with regular sanitization of the school to mitigate the possibility of infection transmission via school surfaces.

A regular cleaning schedule will be used throughout the school year with emphasis on high touch surfaces. Maximum efforts will be made to reduce the need to touch objects/doors (no-touch waste containers, prop doors open), and teachers and staff will regularly reinforce “no sharing” of food, water bottles, or cutlery policies. To the greatest extent possible, classroom materials and equipment will be made of materials that can be cleaned and disinfected.

Recess

Play is an essential component of a child’s development. We also know that the risk of viral spread is significantly lower outside. Therefore, recess will be taken with as little intervention as possible.

- Recess will be outdoors whenever the weather allows for it. When indoor recess is necessary, teachers will utilize the same caution as they do outside. The gymnasium has plenty of space to accommodate for cautious physical activity.
- Distancing requirements will not be enforced, although the recess supervisors will apply common sense.
- Students will be required to wash/sanitize hands before and after recess.

Chapels and Assemblies



Lower School chapels are already divided into cohorts. Additional spacing between cohorts will be implemented.

Upper School chapels will meet as normal; however, additional spacing measures will be enforced.

Other large group assemblies will be canceled, postponed, or be done through virtual technology when appropriate.

Athletics



As of July 16, the NCCSA is in Phase 2, which prohibits conference play. You can view full details here: <https://nccsa.app.box.com/s/r267022mn711j6et2n2qv4pr6ja2cg1s>

However, GCA is currently looking at other means outside of conference play to allow students to compete safely.

Pick-up and Drop-off of Students

We are cutting down our drop-off entries to two locations: the main doors and the high school hallway. Pick-up will remain normal.

Teachers will begin screening at 7:30 A.M., but doors will not open until 7:40 A.M. To ensure your student is able to receive a screening and make it class on time, we advise that parents and students arrive at school early enough to not feel rushed.

To limit the number of people in the building, parents will not be allowed in the building at drop-off.

Middle School and High School Transitions

For the time being, students will be allowed to switch classrooms as they did pre-COVID-19. The following guidance will be enforced:

- To reduce the hallway crowd, students will be given designated lockers times. They will need to plan ahead for textbooks and materials. If books are forgotten, grace will be given so long as it does not become a habit.
- Students will not be admitted in their next classroom until the teacher in the classroom gives them the “okay.” The teachers will be cleaning off every desk between each hour.
- While students are waiting to enter class, we are strongly recommending physical distancing.

Visitors, Class Parties, and Meals

To eliminate outside exposure, we are greatly reducing the visitors that come on campus. Only essential vendors and volunteers will be permitted to enter past the main office. Each essential visitor will receive a health screening upon entrance.

Class parties will be limited to students only. Parents may drop off simple snacks (see your child’s teacher for details).

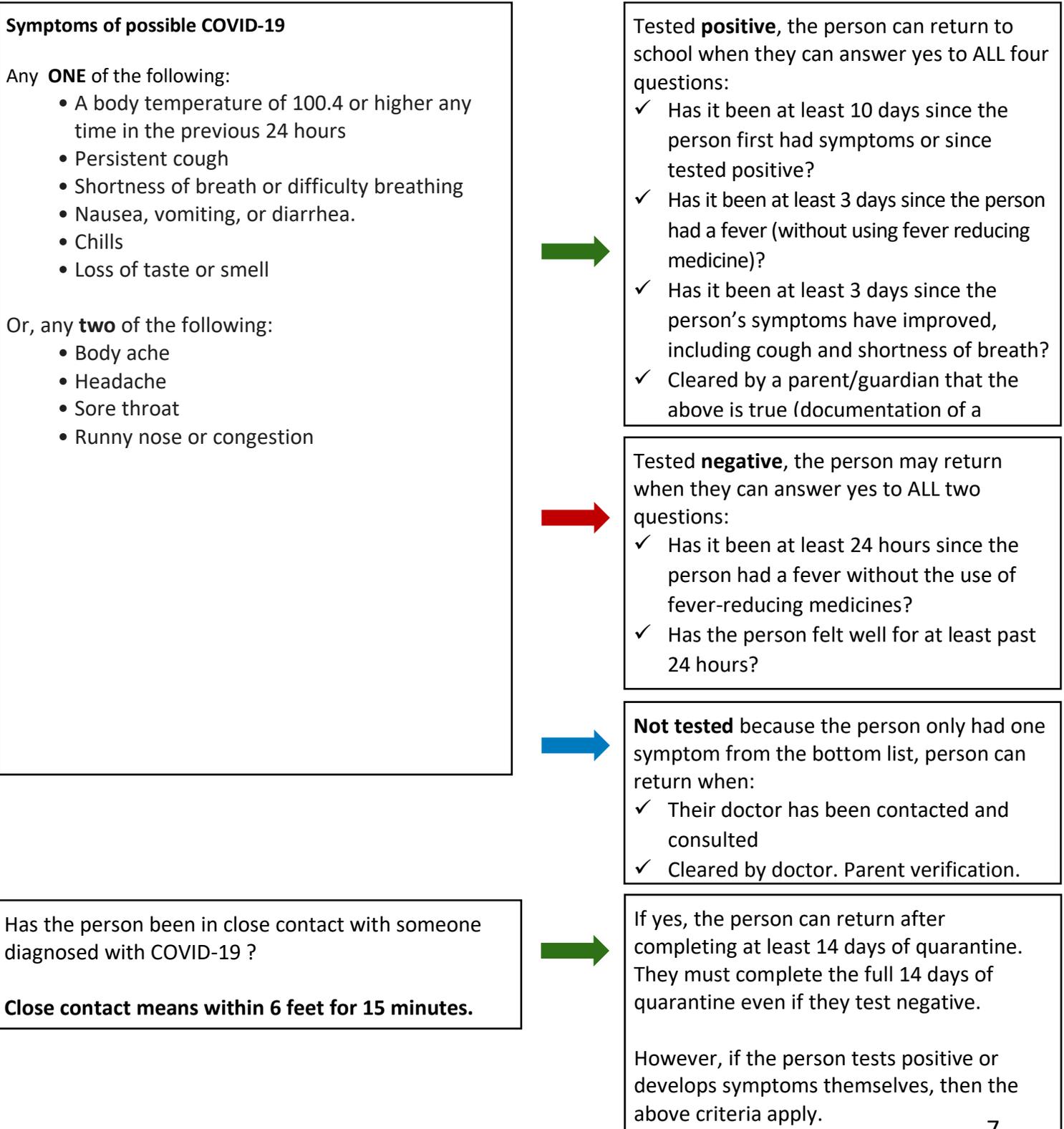
Parents may continue to drop off meals for their child at the front office, but they may not eat with them for the indefinite future.

Field Trips

Field trips will be greatly limited this year. See your child’s teacher for details.

Handling Presumptive Positive Cases

GCA is obligated to notify local health authorities of confirmed COVID-19 cases among children and staff (as required by NCGS § 130A-136).



Extent of Contact Tracing

- GCA will not require a sibling's class to quarantine (E.g.: if a student in 3rd grade contracts COVID-19 and has siblings in the 6th and 11th grades, only the siblings will be required to quarantine, not the sibling's classmates)
- GCA will not require the entire class to quarantine. Families will be notified as indicated below, and individual family members will be given the choice to quarantine based upon the information they receive. Based upon the definition of "close contact," not every student in that class would have been in close contact with that student.

Communication of COVID-19 Cases

1. GCA will notify local health authorities of confirmed COVID-19 cases among children and staff (as required by NCGS § 130A-136).
2. GCA will coordinate with local health officials to notify staff and families immediately while maintaining confidentiality in accordance with FERPA, NCGS § 130A-143, and all other state and federal laws.

Instructional Provisions for Those Out of School Due to Covid-19

To ensure that no child falls behind in the event of a COVID-19 related absence, the student must watch the classroom instruction live every day they are absent. Assignment details and a class link will be given to the student/parents in an email. If a student's symptoms are too severe to participate, the parents should notify the teacher/office immediately, so that proper attendance is taken. The student's absence will not count against them if the student engages in the remote learning option the teacher provides for them.

Screenings



Self-Screening

All students, faculty, staff, are encouraged to self-screen, with the help of parents or a caregiver, when appropriate, before leaving home each school day for the symptoms stated above. A person should not come to school under any circumstances if he/she displays symptoms.

On-Campus Screening

Upon entry each day, each student will be required to undergo a brief health-screening that includes temperature checks. Any person determined by a staff member to meet the above criteria during the school day will be immediately sent home or placed in a designated isolation area at school until they are taken home. It is required that parents make immediate arrangements for the pick-up of a child presenting any of these symptoms.

The Family's Responsibility

No one knows the interactions of their child better than the parents. We are asking parents to accept the responsibility of making the decision regarding their child's education that is in the best interest of their family. Please prayerfully consider if the steps we are taking as a community are right for your family's situation.

References

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University of Toronto, Hospital for Sick Kids