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RCLS



Rochester Central Lutheran School
PRESCHOOL-GRADE 8

COVID
*RISK-
MITIGATION
PLAN*



2021-22 SCHOOL YEAR

August 2021

Updated March 2022

RCLS'S RESPONSE TO COVID-19

March 2020: RCLS implemented a contingency plan that would a) minimize the risk of COVID-19 for students and staff and b) allow the continuation of the best possible education for our students. Per the governor's order, RCLS was closed and a remote learning plan was implemented. This was a challenging endeavor, but we are pleased to say that our teachers and students still met the year's learning standards. Not a single learning goal was missed.

September 2020: We returned to in-person learning in the classroom. Stringent cleaning, social distancing, and masking strategies were utilized to minimize risk. Gratefully, we were in school in-person for all but three weeks of the school year and, to our knowledge, we had NO transmission of the virus in school, in spite of a handful of positive COVID-19 cases in our school community.

May 2021: As we dismissed at the end of the school year, vaccinations were available to everyone 12 and older. We all enjoyed a return to near-normal pre-pandemic conditions as the risk of COVID-19 decreased early in the summer.

August 2021: The risk presented by COVID-19 increased in summer and fall 2021 with the widespread Delta variant. In response to the rising numbers of COVID-19 cases, to the apparent increased risk to children, and on the advice of state and local health officials, RCLS again adopted some risk mitigation strategies for the 21-22 school year. As we have always done, we shaped RCLS's risk-mitigation plan from the health recommendations of the Center for Disease Control (CDC), the Minnesota Department of Health (MDH), the Minnesota Department of Education (MDE), and the Olmsted County Public Health (OCPH). We also have relied heavily on the input and expertise of our Covid Advisory Committee, RCLS parents and physician-scientists who are listed on the next page of this document. As the school year progressed into the winter months and the Omicron variant began to spread through the community, a RCLS families quarantined exposed or infected students and RCLS continued to follow published guidelines for risk mitigation. These actions have been remarkably effective in minimizing the spread of COVID-19 in school and in keeping RCLS students learning in-person. Remote learning was provided for students required to quarantine or isolate because of COVID-19 exposure or infection, but we have been able to maintain in-person learning for all classrooms all year.

Now, in response to declining COVID-19 numbers nationwide due to vaccinations and previous infections, the CDC has published updated guidelines for prevention of infection. "[COVID-19 Community Levels](#) are a new tool to help communities decide what prevention steps to take based on the latest [county] data," which includes not just the number of COVID-19 cases, but also the number of local hospitalizations and hospital capacity. On March 4, 2022, RCLS adopted this new tool as a guide for its masking policy. Other mitigation measures, most notably quarantine and isolation measures, will be informed by current CDC/MDH guidelines, adapted only as recommended by RCLS's COVID-19 Advisory Committee.

Regardless of public health conditions and related risk-mitigation strategies, RCLS is committed to providing high quality instruction and extracurricular opportunities firmly embedded in Christian faith and values. Thank you for your faithfulness in honoring our efforts to keep the RCLS community healthy.

Committed to Grace, Faith, and Learning for Life,

Suzanne Lagerwaard, Interim Principal

Covid Advisory Committee

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*Questions about the 21-22 COVID-19 Risk-Mitigation Plan or COVID-19 or vaccines, generally?
Email members of the advisory committee directly or at rcls@rcls.net.*

Covid Risk-Mitigation Plan At-a-Glance

▶ What?

RCLS will practice or provide:

- Optional but strongly recommended masking when the COVID-19 Community Level is published at "Medium" or "Low" and required when the level is at "High"
- Physical distancing as much as possible.
- Handwashing & respiratory etiquette.
- Increased ventilation due to improvements in HVAC system.

RCLS will encourage:

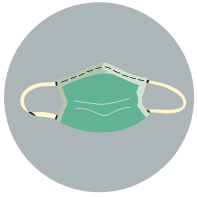
- COVID-19 vaccinations for all eligible students, staff, and parents.
- Health screenings for all students, staff, and visitors prior to campus visits.
- Students to stay home if symptoms of COVID-19 are present or if exposed to COVID-19. Current MDH guidelines will apply.

▶ Why?

- Decreased likelihood that students or staff will transmit what has been determined a highly contagious variant of COVID-19.
- Increased likelihood of in-person learning for more students.

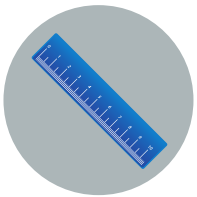
RCLS risk-mitigation strategies are based on current recommendations by state and local health officials and will be modified as those recommendations change.

School Risk-mitigation Strategies



Masking will be optional but strongly recommended when Olmsted County's Covid Community Level is rated as Low or Medium, as the CDC calculates and reports that level. We will, however, adhere to the most recent CDC guidance, so if Olmsted would return to a "high" Covid-19 Community Level--again, as calculated by the CDC--we will temporarily return to universal masking, as well.

- Students are asked to keep 3 masks at school.
- Students and staff are not required to wear masks outdoors.
- By federal order, masks are required on school buses and other forms of public transportation in the U.S.
- Masking will be required for 5 days in classrooms where students are exposed to COVID-19 in the classroom.



Per CDC guidelines, RCLS will implement **physical distancing** to the extent possible. This means different strategies in different contexts on the RCLS campus:

- Classrooms will be free of nonessential furniture, and teachers will structure classroom layouts in a way that will allow some distance between students.
- Chapel will be in-person for some grade levels each week while other grades will participate remotely from their classrooms. This will allow students to experience live chapel on a rotating basis in limited numbers until we can all congregate together.
- Students will eat in the lunchroom in grade-level groups with as much spacing as possible between groups. Students will be assigned seating within their classroom groups.
- Outside recess areas on the south, north, west, and east of the school will be utilized for recess to allow for more distancing while at play.



Handwashing and respiratory etiquette will be taught, encouraged, and reinforced throughout the day.

- Hand-sanitizing stations will be set up throughout the building.
- Covering coughs & sneezes will be taught and modeled.



In September 2020, bi-polar ionization technology was integrated into RCLS's HVAC system. This technology improves **ventilation and air quality** by deactivating airborne mold, bacteria, allergens, and viruses and by mitigating the risk of aerosols and dust particles that transport virus. This is an active process that exchanges air in a space several times an hour, thereby improving air quality and mitigating risk throughout the school building.



The virus that causes COVID-19 is mainly spread by respiratory droplets, so current recommendations suggest that **daily cleaning** is enough to sufficiently remove potential virus that may be on surfaces. High-touch surfaces such as tables, desks, chairs, drinking fountains (used only to fill water bottles), sinks, and lockers and door handles will be cleaned each day.

Family/Student Strategies & School Response to COVID-19 Cases

Get a COVID-19 vaccination

Vaccination for all eligible students and faculty, staff, and family/household members is the most essential strategy to help schools safely resume all normal procedures. Health officials recommend that all eligible persons (currently age 12 and older) receive a vaccine. Please talk with your medical provider, then visit vaccines.gov to find locations in the community to get the COVID vaccine. Questions about available vaccines? RCLS's COVID advisory members would love to answer them. Email them directly or at rcls@rcls.net.

Perform health screening each day

All students and adults entering RCLS are asked to perform a complete health screening prior to each entry onto campus. A screening tool is attached to this document and posted on the [Covid Risk Mitigation page under Current Families at rcls.net](#).

Stay home if COVID symptoms are present

Students, teachers, and staff who have symptoms of infectious illness should stay home and seek counsel from their healthcare provider for testing and care, regardless of vaccination status. Staying home when sick with COVID-19 is essential to keeping COVID-19 infections out of schools.

Notify school office if positive for or exposed to COVID-19

The school office is to be notified if a student or staff member has tested positive for COVID-19 or, *if unvaccinated**, exposed to COVID-19. Students and staff must follow MDH's current recommendations for quarantining in each case.

- [Guidelines if positive for or exposed to COVID-19](#)

*Because some children have not yet had the opportunity to receive a COVID-19 vaccine, RCLS's default will be to assume students are unvaccinated. Those who are vaccinated for COVID-19 may submit an updated vaccination record, which will allow them to attend school without quarantining after exposure outside of school.

School response if positive case in student or staff:

1. RCLS will report positive student or staff case to Olmsted Co. Public Health.
2. In partnership with OCPH, RCLS will [follow current CDC/MDH recommendations for identifying close contacts](#).
3. If students are exposed to Covid-19 in the classroom:
 - a. All parents in the classroom will be notified.
 - b. In grades PS-5, all students/teachers in the homeroom class will wear a mask for 5 days. In grades 6-8, all classes/groups of students/teachers who were exposed will wear a mask for 5 days.
 - c. Testing is recommended for all exposed students and teachers on day 5 after exposure.

RELATED SCHOOL PROTOCOLS

Arrival and departure procedures will minimize risk.



Morning School Arrival

- Instead of parking and walking students into the building, parents are asked to drop students off in car line. Cars will enter the parking lot from the north and drive up to the front sidewalk of the school, where school staff will greet and assist students getting out of cars.
- Students are to wear masks upon arrival.
- Students in Preschool or PreK will go directly to the Stepping Stones playground entrance where they will be met by Stepping Stones staff.
- Students in grades K-5 and 6-8, whether dropped off by parents or by bus, will go directly to their homeroom classrooms, where they will be met by their teachers.

Afternoon School Departure

- Parents are welcomed into the school building after school. Those wishing to walk into school are asked to park in the rows closest to 9th Avenue, enter school with a mask on, and wait for student(s) in the school entryway.
- Those picking their student(s) up in the car line are asked to enter the parking lot from the north and proceed through the car line much like the morning, though a single car line will be directed by staff to split into two at a pick-up point. Students in K-2 will be on the front sidewalk with their classes and teachers. Students in grades 3-8 will be in the first parking row "island" with their classes and teachers.
- At 3:00, all bus riders will be dismissed.
- At 3:05, all Preschool and Prekindergarten students and their siblings will be dismissed, so parents with PS and PK students should arrive to the school or car line by this time.
- At 3:10, all bus students and Clubhouse/Post students will be dismissed.



After-school programming will be offered.

After-school programs such as Athletics, Drama, Lego Club, Art Club, and more will be offered. Coaches, directors, and activity leaders will detail specific protocols as appropriate.



Volunteers & visitors

- All volunteers and visitors will be asked to sign in at the office. Masks will be optional but strongly encouraged for all school visitors.
- Parents are welcomed to walk into the office when they drop off or pick up students early. Students will be called to the office when they are being picked up early.



HOME-BASED COVID-19 SCREENING TOOL

A student, staff member, or potential school visitor experiencing any of the following symptoms should stay home from school and seek counsel from their healthcare provider for testing and care, regardless of vaccination status.

- ☐ Fever or chills
- ☐ Cough
- ☐ Fatigue or headache
- ☐ Loss of taste or smell
- ☐ Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing
- ☐ Body aches
- ☐ Sore throat
- ☐ Nausea, vomiting, or diarrhea
- ☐ Congestion or runny nose

Some of these symptoms may be considered less common or less severe than others and are also associated with diseases other than COVID-19. Others may warrant staying home from school, regardless of the presence of additional symptoms. In either case, the usual procedures for returning to school apply if additional symptoms do not develop and/or it has been determined the symptoms are not due to COVID-19. (e.g. A child with a fever must be free of fever for 24 hours before returning to school).