



NATIVITY
PREPARATORY SCHOOL



HARVARD
T.H. CHAN

SCHOOL OF PUBLIC HEALTH

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20 QUESTIONS TO ASK BEFORE SENDING YOUR KIDS BACK TO SCHOOL

Getting kids back to school must be a national priority.

The risks to students from school closures, including “virtual dropouts”, lack of food security, safety, and adverse impacts on social, physical and mental health, must be weighed against risks from being back in school. The scientific evidence to date about COVID-19 tells us that kids are:

- less likely to get infected than adults
- less likely to suffer severe effects if infected
- less likely to transmit to others (particularly true of those aged 0-9 years old)

There is no such thing as “zero risk” in anything we do, and certainly not during a pandemic. There will be some risk to students, teachers, staff, and families. As such, it is important to reduce these risks to the extent possible.

Returning to school should not be “school as usual.” While we offer some insight into the responses you might receive, and expect, each school’s response will be different because there is no “one size fits all” plan for COVID-19.

For more details, we encourage you to read the full report which is available here: <https://schools.forhealth.org/risk-reduction-strategies-for-reopening-schools/>

The following set of questions was developed as a guide for parents, teachers and school staff who may not be sure what to ask or look for at their school.

Nativity Prep’s answers to the questions are included in red below each question.

1. Are the number of cases in the area low enough for schools to reopen?

Currently Massachusetts is experiencing low rates of community transmission however, the recent trend shows an increase in case numbers. If this increase continues and reaches an unsafe level, Nativity Prep will go to a completely remote model of education.

2. When and how will masks be required and how will the school support mask use?

Masks are required to be worn by all persons at all times within the Nativity Prep building. There will be mask breaks built into the daily schedule at times when all students can be separated by more than 6 feet. Masks may be removed for lunch and snack when the students are all separated by more than 6 feet. Individuals with private offices may remove masks while alone in the private office.

3. Will hand washing stations or hand sanitizer be available throughout the school and when will children be required to wash their hands?

Hand washing stations are being added to the first and third floors of Nativity Prep and hand sanitizer will be available at the entrance, in all hallways, and in all classrooms and offices.

4. When and how will physical distancing be maintained throughout the school day?

Student desks in all classrooms are separated by at least 6 feet in all directions. The daily schedule will be adjusted and staggered to limit the number of students in the hallways at any time and bathroom breaks will be scheduled to also limit the number of students in each bathroom.

5. Will outdoor air supply rates (ventilation) be increased in school buildings, including classrooms, and how will the school verify that ventilation is adequate?

In addition to the built-in ventilation system, window fans are being installed in each classroom to increase the air flow. Our heating and ventilation consultant will verify the number of air changes per hour in the classrooms.

6. Does the ventilation system use a filter with a rating of MERV 13 or higher for the air going into classrooms and has it been inspected or replaced recently?

Filters will be replaced prior to the start of school as part of the annual system maintenance. The filters will be upgraded to MERV13 if the system can handle these filters.

7. Will portable air cleaners with HEPA filters be used in classrooms and other relevant spaces in the school?

Each classroom, office and common space will have a portable air cleaner with a HEPA filter.

8. Will any physical barriers (e.g., plexiglass) be installed in the school?

A student patient area is being set up at the Chestnut Street entrance to the school and will include plexiglass barriers. The patient area will be accessible from the nurse's station and any dismissals from the nurse will exit on to Chestnut Street.

9. Will de-densification strategies, like staggered arrival and dismissal times, be implemented?

Access to Nativity Prep will be limited to faculty and students. Family members, alumni and other visitors will be engaged through the use of video conferencing.

Nativity Morning Assembly will take place through the use of Zoom Teleconferencing and will connect to each classroom in the building without the need to gather in the chapel.

Student arrivals and dismissals will be staggered to limit the number of students at the door at each time and to allow for individual health screening of each student.

10. Will the school consider using alternative classroom and lunchroom spaces?

Our hybrid plan allows the use of our regular classroom spaces. Since there will not be more than half of a class in at any time, we can maintain proper social distancing between desks.

Lunch will be served in classroom spaces with all desks at a minimum of 6 feet apart. In good weather outdoors may be used as an option.

11. How will the school limit the number of shared surfaces and what is the plan for regularly disinfecting surfaces throughout the entire school?

Each student will be assigned to a classroom desk for use throughout the day. All student Chromebooks are assigned to individuals with a labeled recharging slot. Remaining surface sharing will be minimized, but a cleaning schedule will be implemented to disinfect high-touch surfaces (doorknobs, bathrooms, etc) every 2-3 hours.

12. How will transportation to and from school change when school reopens?

Families will continue to be responsible for transportation to and from school.

13. Who is the “point person” or group in charge of the COVID-19 response team/plan and how will they communicate changes in school policy to parents/students?

The Nativity Prep COVID Educational Planning Committee is heading up the planning of our fall reopening. This committee is led by Principal Goso, together with various members of the Nativity faculty and administration. Communication will take place through email, text and phone calls to the Nativity Prep community.

14. What guidance for contact tracing, testing, and quarantine/isolation is in place in the event that my child’s teacher or another student in the class contracts COVID-19?

We will follow CDC Guidelines for contact tracing, testing, and quarantine/isolation if someone contracts COVID-19.

If a person becomes symptomatic while in our school building, our nurse will follow the protocol for medical evaluation, potential isolation, follow-up and return to school. Working through our reporting structure, our nurse will collaborate with the Boston Public Health Commission to report any suspected cases of exposure or transmission of COVID-19.

If an individual in a school is confirmed, suspects, or has been in contact with someone confirmed to have COVID-19, Nativity Prep will notify the BPHC Infectious Disease Bureau to receive direction.

Next steps may include quarantining a group of students/faculty or the whole school; providing necessary information for Boston Public Health Commission Infectious Disease to conduct contact tracing; and providing direction regarding when individuals can return to school or work.

15. How will parents, students, and staff be educated about symptoms and will temperature or other health checks be done on students, staff and teachers every day?

Temperature checks will be done on all persons entering Nativity Prep each day. Our school nurse be our primary point of education for COVID-19 Symptoms and other health checks.

16. If a teacher or student has to stay home, what strategies are in place to support remote work or learning and make sure students don’t fall behind in their schoolwork?

A remote learning plan will be implemented for students who are not in attendance at the school. A comprehensive remote learning plan will be implemented in the event the entire school goes to remote status.

17. What other policy changes are being considered to reduce COVID-19 transmission risk?

Many of the community-wide events will not be held this year or will take place utilizing teleconferencing or other appropriate social distancing measures.

The janitorial staff will be extended and supplemented by a professional cleaning service which will be on-site each school day.

18. What precautions will there be during physical education, indoor choir, band, or theater to make these activities safer?

We will not be having these activities this school year.

19. Will recess be modified when schools reopen?

Each class will be assigned a recess time period in either the outdoor play area or in the school gym. Activities will be limited to non-contact play with social distancing. This may include nature walks, yoga and other activities.

20. Will students be allowed to participate in sports?

Nativity Prep will not be running any sports programs during the fall season. A determination on winter sports will take place later in the school year.

These questions were developed as a joint project between scientists at Portland State University and the Healthy Buildings program at Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health.

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