

WHITTIER FRIENDS SCHOOL'S 12 STEP PLAN FOR REOPENING

The following summarizes our current plan for school reopening based on the available evidence as well as expert opinion, organized into the categories below:

1. Screening to prevent symptomatic individuals from entering the school
2. Hand hygiene
3. Facial Coverings for people entering our campus
4. Physical Distancing
5. Cohorting
6. Environmental Cleaning
7. Ventilation
8. Mitigation of Risk for Students at Higher Risk for Severe Disease
9. Special Considerations for Children and Youth with Medical and/or Behavioral Complexities
10. Mental Health Awareness and Support for Children
11. Protection of Staff and at-risk Persons or Families
12. Communicating about COVID-19 to Children, Youth and Parents/Caregivers

Adopted from the University of Toronto, Hospital for Sick Kids

1. SCREENING TO PREVENT SYMPTOMATIC INDIVIDUALS FROM ENTERING THE SCHOOL

In order to prevent the spread of infection, students, teachers and other employees who have signs/ symptoms of COVID-19 (according to CDC, California DPH and local Public Health guidance) should stay home and decisions about testing and return to school should be guided by CDC and California DPH in consultation with local Public Health protocols. In addition, return to school decisions for those who have had an exposure to SARS-CoV-2 should be in accordance with local Public Health recommendations.

Whittier Friends School hereby states and implements a strict exclusion policy for symptomatic students and employees. Teachers and administrators will be provided with information on signs and symptoms of COVID-19 in children so that appropriate action can be taken if children develop symptoms during the day.

Parents and caregivers are ultimately responsible for the screening of their children, daily, at home, prior to entering campus. A checklist will be provided for them to do daily screening before arriving at school to clear for entry. This daily health screening will check if someone has taken fever-reducing medication within the last 12 hours, has had new symptoms in the last 48 hours, and whether someone has been exposed to a person who has COVID-19 in the past 14 days. Temperatures will be checked upon arrival for children and staff members by one of our staff members. Temperatures must not exceed 100.4°.

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Age-appropriate signage is placed at Whittier Friends School to remind students and families that only essential people should be on campus, and to report acute respiratory illness to staff.

Virtual learning or other forms of structured learning may be implemented on an as-needed basis for children who are required to stay home because they are sick or in isolation due to SARS-CoV-2 infection or exposure. Whittier Friends School will identify and implement available options for students who have limited internet availability or other barriers to online learning.

2. HAND HYGIENE

SARS-CoV-2 and other respiratory viruses are almost exclusively spread by respiratory droplet transmission. As a result, and because virus shedding may occur prior to symptom onset or in the absence of symptoms, routine, frequent and proper hand hygiene (soap and water or hand sanitizer) is critical to limit transmission. In fact, proper hand hygiene is one of the most effective strategies to prevent the spread of most respiratory viruses including SARS-CoV-2, particularly during the pre- symptomatic phase of illness.

Students should be taught how to clean their hands properly (with age appropriate material) and to try and avoid touching their face, eyes, nose and mouth as much as possible. This should be done in a non-judgmental and positive manner. Students who have symptoms of a respiratory tract infection should stay home and students should be reminded to sneeze or cough into their elbow/sleeve.

Age-appropriate signage is placed at Whittier Friends School to remind students to perform hand hygiene and cough/sneezing etiquette. A regular schedule for routine hand hygiene, above and beyond what is usually recommended (before eating food, after using the washroom etc.) will be encouraged. Possible options would be to have regularly scheduled hand hygiene breaks based on a pre-specified schedule (for example, scheduling a minimum of 5 times during the day). These extra hand washing moments will occur in the classroom, where staff can monitor, and where staff can routinely clean sinks.

Access to hand hygiene facilities (hand sanitizer dispensers and sinks/soap) is critical with consideration for ensuring accessibility for those with disabilities or other accommodation needs. Hand sanitizer (60-90% USP grade alcohol, not technical grade alcohol) will be available at the entry point for each classroom. Adequate resources and a replenishment process will be implemented to ensure supplies are available to perform hand hygiene frequently. Liquid soap and hand sanitizer will be replenished and tissues available for drying. No-touch waste receptacles will be available for disposal of materials. Disposable disinfectant wipes will be readily available so that commonly used surfaces can be wiped down by individuals before each use (teachers, older students).

3. FACIAL COVERINGS FOR PEOPLE ENTERING OUR CAMPUS

Non-medical facial coverings may reduce transmission from individuals who may have the virus. The extent of this benefit is unknown (especially in children) though would be potentially beneficial if worn properly.

After great consideration, facial masks are recommended for all people entering Whittier Friends School Campus: children, staff, and other adults.

We recognize there is continued research being conducted regarding facial coverings and the success of preventing SARS-CoV-2 transmission. Because of the unreliable and conflicting data, along with fluctuations in recommendations at the state and county level, our policy on mask requirement may fluctuate. While at Whittier Friends School, staff, parents, students of a certain age, and at certain times, may be required to wear a mask. Pay attention to written school communication, including school signage to note what the current policies are.

4. PHYSICAL DISTANCING

The objective of physical distancing is to reduce the likelihood of contact that may lead to transmission and has been a widely used strategy during the pandemic.

When students are in the classroom, to the extent possible, Whittier Friends School will arrange the classroom furniture to leave as much space as possible between students. Smaller class sizes, including 10 or fewer preschool children in a room, will aid in physical distancing.

When weather permits, consideration will be given to having classes outside.

Large gatherings/assemblies will not take place for the immediate future. Singing practices/performances may pose a higher level of risk and special consideration will be given to how they are held, the room ventilation and the distance between performers.

Hand hygiene will be performed prior to and after lunch breaks, and as weather permits, lunch breaks for Elementary students will take place outside. Preschoolers will have lunch in their classroom, spaced for Social Distancing.

Students will be required to perform hand hygiene prior to sports activities/outdoor play/playground use. Sports and physical education classes will take place as per past Whittier Friends School practice. Sports equipment (e.g. balls, hockey sticks etc.) will be cleaned at the

conclusion of the activity. Whittier Friends School will endeavor to offer as many of their usual sports, clubs and activities as possible.

5. COHORTING

The purpose of cohorting is to limit the mixing of students and staff so that if a child or employee develops infection, the number of exposures would be reduced. However, cohorting should not be done in a manner that compromises daily school attendance or alters the curriculum options available to children.

Whittier Friends School is already organized in a “cohort” style, with the children from the preschool room and the children from the elementary room staying distant from each other. These will continue to be our practices.

6. 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). Whittier Friends School is paying particular attention to cleaning and sanitizing of the school immediately prior to the first day of school, and to thereafter regularly sanitize the school to mitigate the possibility of transmission infection on 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. In addition, class materials will not be shared, but will rather be regularly used by individual students.

7. VENTILATION

Detailed recommendations are beyond the scope of this document. In brief, it is expected that environmental conditions and airflow influence the transmissibility of SARS-CoV-2. Adequately ventilated classroom environments (e.g. open windows with air flow, and improved airflow through ventilation systems) are expected to be associated with less likelihood of transmission compared with poorly ventilated settings. Whittier Friends School will, prior to the first day of school, engage professionals to provide a comprehensive inspection of ventilation systems, and make recommendations for improvement to maximum safety guidelines, and to improve

and optimize classroom ventilation. Whittier Friends School is committed to increasing the proportion of outside air brought in through these systems, where possible, and to the use of outdoors or environments with improved ventilation (e.g. keeping windows open, weather permitting).

8. MITIGATION OF RISK FOR STUDENTS AT HIGHER RISK FOR SEVERE DISEASE

Some children may be at higher risk of adverse outcome from COVID-19 due to underlying medical conditions such as immunocompromised states or chronic medical conditions such as cardiac and lung disorders. Children and youth who are medically complex, particularly those with medical technological supports associated with developmental disabilities and/or genetic anomalies, are also in a potentially higher risk category. However, at the present time, there is no convincing evidence to suggest the level of medical risk to these children from SARS-CoV-2 is different from that posed by other respiratory viruses, such as influenza. As a result, given the unintended consequences associated with not attending school, attending school is recommended for the majority of these children. (For more details pertaining specifically to medically and behaviorally complex children and youth, see section 9 below)

Students with underlying conditions may attend school as they would per usual. However, it is important for parents to work with their child's health-care providers so that an informed decision can be made. This is particularly relevant for children with newly diagnosed illnesses requiring the first-time use of new or augmented immunosuppression. In the event that such children have a documented exposure to the virus, in addition to involvement of the local public health unit, it is recommended that the child's parent/caregiver(s) contact the child's health-care provider for further management.

9. SPECIAL CONSIDERATIONS FOR CHILDREN & YOUTH WITH MEDICAL AND/OR BEHAVIORAL COMPLEXITIES

Return to school will present unique challenges to children and youth with medical and/or behavioral complexities (e.g. a child with cerebral palsy that requires feeding and respiratory supports in the classroom) and their families. Many of these families have had a prolonged period of time in home isolation compounded by a lack of respite and/or homecare supports. Transitioning medically and behaviorally complex children back to school requires specific focus and will be extremely important as many families are already in crisis mode.

Whittier Friends School will liaise with parents to accommodate a more individualized return to school to ensure smoother transitions to ensure that those families who choose to not send their children to school receive remote learning opportunities and do not lose access to home care and respite supports. Whittier Friends School will make accommodation where reasonable

and appropriate to ensure that students continue to receive access to therapy and nursing services while in the school.

10. MENTAL HEALTH AWARENESS AND SUPPORT FOR CHILDREN

Whittier Friends School will make efforts to address known sources of distress and extend flexibility within existing administrative processes. It can be anticipated that rigidity would likely lead to increased stress, anxiety, depression and school refusal that could be otherwise avoided. Similarly, children can be anticipated to return to school at diverse academic levels even within a classroom. It will be critical to provide opportunities for early identification of learning needs and academic support to ensure that children neither become overwhelmed nor bored in the school setting, as these are frequent antecedents to school refusal and mental health problems. For children who may find the new school environment particularly challenging, such as some children with developmental disabilities, extra supports will be needed. Consultation with their parents and families to better understand their individual circumstances and needs is recommended. It can be anticipated that children and youth may experience increased stress and anxiety related to the COVID-19 pandemic. In addition, children and youth may have mental health conditions, such as anxiety, depression, and substance abuse, which may have been exacerbated by social distancing, including school closures, and may experience symptom escalation on return to school.

Whittier Friends School will make an effort to be flexible throughout the 2020-2021 school year in program and/or school enrollment to provide for children and youth who have transitioned to a new program or school for the 2020/2021 school year. Increased in-school educational support may be provided to students and classroom teachers to enable early identification and remediation of learning gaps that some students will have incurred during the school closures.

11. PROTECTION OF STAFF AND AT-RISK PERSONS OR FAMILIES

While detailed recommendations are beyond the scope of this document, the safety of the school staff is an important consideration. Risk mitigation for teachers and other staff will be similar to those recommended for other public settings. With regards to children's home environment, it would be appropriate to consider that the risk posed by potentially infected children to other household members likely varies in relation to socioeconomic status, household overcrowding and the presence of children and adults at increased risk of severe COVID-19 at home.

Physical distancing of school staff from children and other staff will be emphasized and practiced as much as reasonably possible. If close prolonged contact with others cannot be avoided, wearing a mask is a reasonable option. However, if used in the classroom, the teacher should explain the rationale to the children. It is acknowledged that some teachers and

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other school staff may choose to regularly wear masks. This is a personal choice and should not be discouraged. Further guidance should be developed to mitigate risk in home situations where an affected child resides (in the same home) with siblings or adults with underlying conditions that put them at increased risk for more severe disease.

12. COMMUNICATING ABOUT COVID-19 TO CHILDREN, YOUTH AND PARENTS/CAREGIVERS

A detailed communication strategy is beyond the scope of this document. However, it is acknowledged that clear, age-appropriate communication about COVID-19 and what to expect when children and youth return to school should occur in advance of school reopening. In addition, it will be important that regular updates be provided to children and their parents/caregivers throughout the school year.

Parents, children, youth and the community at large should be educated that SARS-CoV-2 is likely to persist and circulate like other respiratory viruses. They should be made aware that in general, SARS- CoV-2 causes mild disease in the majority of children and young adults and that the best overall strategy for these cohorts and the population at large, taking into account the massive secondary adverse health and well-being implication of the lockdown, and return to school with care.

A FINAL NOTE:

In the event that our elementary students will need to learn “remotely” due to a shelter-at-home mandate by Los Angeles County, State of California, or other governing body, Whittier Friends School will continue to provide curriculum, learning opportunities, and Progress Reports documenting each elementary child’s educational progress, through virtual/online and/or printed out materials. We also will offer optional curriculum and learning opportunities for children in prekindergarten/preschool, who wish to continue structured learning, if we are mandated to shelter-at-home.

The same 12 Step Reopening Plan would be utilized to reopen again, should our school be closed temporarily due to a governing body mandate.

REFERENCES (partial):

- *County of Los Angeles Public Health*
- *California State Licensing (Child Care Centers)*
- *Los Angeles County Office of Education*

REFERENCES (continued):

- *California Department of Education*
- *Association of Christian Schools International*
- *American Academy of Pediatrics*
- *University of Toronto, Hospital for Sick Kids*
- *ChurchWest Insurance Services*
- *Brotherhood Mutual Insurance Company*
- *Church & Tax Law*
- *National Association of Independent Schools*
- *Western Association of School and Colleges*
- *California State Department of Education*
- *California State Department of Public Health*
- *Center for Disease Control*